

"In the Latter Days, the sun shall rise from the West"

Holy Prophet Muhammad(Peace and blessings of Allah be on him)



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The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community



Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (as)



AHMADIYYA
MUSLIM COMMUNITY

United States of America

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community is a religious organization, international in its scope, with branches in 207 countries in Africa, North America, South America, Asia, Australia, and Europe. The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community was established in 1889 by Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (as) (1835-1908) in Qadian, a small and remote village in the Punjab province of India. He claimed to be the expected reformer of the latter days, the Awaited One of the world community of religions (The Mahdi and Messiah).

The Movement he started is an embodiment of the benevolent message of Islam – peace, universal brotherhood, and submission to the Will of God – in its pristine purity.

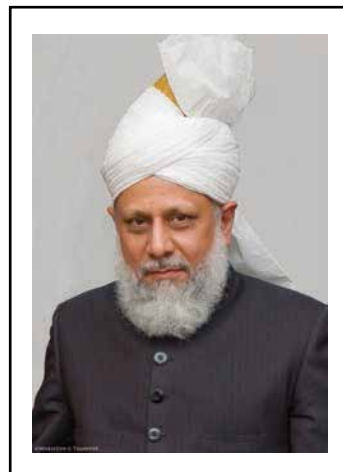
Hazrat Ahmad (as) proclaimed Islam as the religion of man: “The religion of the people of the right path” (The Holy Qur'an: 98:6). The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community was created under divine guidance with the objective to rejuvenate Islamic moral and spiritual values. It encourages interfaith dialogue, diligently defends Islam and tries to correct misunderstandings about Islam in the West. It advocates peace, tolerance, love and understanding among followers of different faiths. It firmly believes in and acts upon Qura'nic teaching:

“There is no compulsion in religion” (The Holy Qur'an: 2:257).

It strongly rejects violence and terrorism in any form and for any reason. After the passing of its founder, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community has been headed by his elected successors. The present Head of the Community, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, was elected in 2003. His official title is Khalifatul Masih V or Fifth Successor of the Promised Messiah (as).

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Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad,
Khalifatul Masih V (aba)

The Muslim Sunrise

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Dr. Mufti Muhammad Sadiq (ra) was the first Ahmadiyya Muslim missionary to arrive in America. In 1921, he founded the Muslim Sunrise, which stands today as the longest running Muslim publication in America. The magazine seeks to open discussions on Islam and topics relating to religion in general. It highlights the role of Islam in an ever-changing global society. It provides a platform for public opinion on contemporary issues and presents their solutions from an Islamic perspective.

The Muslim Sunrise welcomes letters to the Editor, Questions and Submissions.

Email us at MuslimSunrise@Ahmadiyya.us or go online to www.MuslimSunrise.com



Acronyms for salutations used in this publication

- sa: Sallallahu 'Alaihi Wa Sallam (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him)
as: 'Alaihis-Salam (may peace be upon him)
ra: Radhi-Allahu 'Anhu/'Anha (may Allah be pleased with him/her)
rh: Rahimahullahu Ta'ala (may Allah shower His mercy on him)
aba: Ayyadahullahu Ta'ala Bi-Nasrihil-'Aziz (may Allah support him with His mighty help)

Verse numbers in the references from the Holy Qur'an count Tasmiya at the beginning of a chapter as the first verse.

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Muslims follow the name of God's prophets with the prayer *alaihis salaam* or 'may peace be upon him,' and for the Holy Prophet Muhammad, *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* or 'may peace and blessings of God be upon him.' Companions of prophets and righteous personalities who have passed away are saluted by *radhi-Allaho anhu/a* or 'may Allah be pleased with him/her.' While such salutations sometimes are not set out in the text for readability, we encourage readers to offer these prayers as if set out in full.

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FROM THE HOLY QUR'AN

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ ①

هَلْ أَتَاكَ حَدِيثُ ضَيْفِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ
الْمُكْرَمِينَ ②

إِذْ دَخَلُوا عَلَيْهِ فَقَالُوا سَلَامًا ٥ قَالَ
سَلَامٌ ٦ قَوْمٌ مُنْكَرُونَ ٧

فَرَاغَ إِلَى أَهْلِهِ فَجَاءَ بِعِجْلٍ سَمِينٍ ٨

فَقَرَّبَهُ إِلَيْهِمْ قَالَ أَلَا تَأْكُلُونَ ٩

In the name of Allah, the Gracious, the Merciful.

Has the story of Abraham's honored guests reached you?

When they came to him and said, 'Peace!' he said in reply, 'On you be peace.' He thought that they were strangers.

And he went quietly to his household, and brought a fatted calf, and he placed it before them and said, 'Will you not eat?'

(The Holy Qur'an, 51:25-28)

HADITH

SAYINGS OF THE

PROPHET

MUHAMMAD (sa)

Hazrat Abu Shuraih Al-Ka'bi (ra) relates that he heard the Messenger (sa) of Allah say: "It is incumbent upon him who believes in Allah and the Day of Judgment that he honors his guest. (Hospitality for) one day and one night, in respect of the guest, is desirable. Hospitality for three days is a right of the guest. That (Hospitality) which is beyond this is charity. It is not proper for him (the guest) to stay (with his host) till he makes himself burdensome on him (to the host)."

(Abu Dawud kitabul at'imah bab fiziya-fah, Musnad Ahmad, p 37/3)

Hazrat Abu Hurairah (ra) relates that a disbeliever stayed with the Messenger (sa) of Allah of Allah as his guest. The Messenger (sa) of Allah ordered that a sheep should be milked for him. So, it was milked. He drank that. Then another was milked. He drank that. Then another. He drank that too. Thus he drank seven sheep's milk. In the morning on the next day, he became a Muslim. The Messenger (sa) of Allah commanded that a sheep should be milked for him. He drank its milk. Then another one was ordered for him but he could not finish all the milk. The Messenger (sa) of Allah said: "A believer drinks just enough to fill a single intestine and a disbeliever drinks enough to fill seven intestines."

(Tirmidhi, Aabwabul at'imah)

EDITORIAL

SUMMER 2017

Hospitality is not only a social value of universal magnitude, but among all faith traditions it is a moral virtue as well, closely connected with one's spiritual growth. In the present issue of the Muslim Sunrise, we have tried to cover as many aspects of hospitality as possible. The articles deal with the tradition of hospitality as practiced at individual and community levels, both in major world religions and in Eastern and Western culture.

The Jews follow the example of Prophet Abraham (as); the Christians welcome and show affection for their guests to win the love of God; the Hindus consider a guest as a god. In Islam, this extremely desirable quality is part and parcel of a Muslim's daily life, exemplified through the guidance and actions of Prophet Muhammad (sa) himself. He has provided detailed instructions on how to serve and honor one's guests.

Following the tradition of the Holy Prophet (sa) of Islam, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community has developed hospitality as an outstanding feature of its religious gatherings. The founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (as) of Qadian, India, established a '*Langar Khana*' – a public kitchen – to serve thousands of his guests who visited him regularly to acquire spiritual knowledge. The tradition of hospitality is observed at a spectacular level at Ahmadiyya Muslim Annual Conventions all over the world where thousands of guests are served with great humility and respect, no matter who they are or where they come from.

It is important that we read the articles and do our best to adopt the virtue of hospitality in our homes and in all our social and religious gatherings.

Your comments and suggestions are always greatly appreciated.

Mubasher Ahmad
Editor-in-Chief



IN THE WORDS OF THE PROMISED MESSIAH^(as)

Hospitality

"After hearing the news of this Heavenly Dispensation, seekers after the truth and people with diverse motives come to visit me... On some days, the influx of visitors can be gradual, but on other days, it picks up a brisk pace. During the past seven years, a little more than sixty thousand guests must have visited me." (1)

"I am always mindful that no guest should be inconvenienced, therefore I always give instructions that, as far as possible, guests should be afforded comfort. The heart of a guest is fragile like glass and is broken by the slightest of knocks. Previously, I had made the arrangement that I would eat with the guests. However, since my illness increased and I have started eating a special diet, I could not continue to do so. In addition, the number of guests increased so much that there was lack of space, therefore, reluctantly, I eat separately. Everyone has my permission to inform us of their special needs. Some people are unwell and specific dietary arrangements can be made for them." (2)

"It should be emphasized to the supervisor of the Langar Khana (i.e. the guesthouse / communal kitchen established by the Promised Messiah (as) in Qadian) that he should keep an eye on the needs of every single guest. Since he works alone and carries a heavy workload, it is possible that he may not remember this all the time, therefore someone else can remind him. If someone is less well-dressed, he should not be ignored, because all guests are equal as far as hospitality is concerned. It is our duty to serve everyone in the best manner, including strangers, and to take care of all their needs... People come here to seek the truth in full sincerity after traveling hundreds and thousands of miles. If they experience any discomfort here, it is possible they may feel hurt, and their grief may cause them to raise objections. In this way, it becomes a trial for them – and responsibility for this sin lies with the host." (3)

"The weather is not agreeable nowadays and those who have gathered here are all guests. They should be treated well and honored; therefore, worthy arrangements should be made to feed them. If someone asks for milk, give him milk; if someone asks for tea, give him tea. If someone is unwell, the appropriate food should be prepared and served to him." (4)

On one occasion, the Promised Messiah (as) said to the manager of the Langar Khana, Mian Najmuddin, "Many guests have arrived; some of them are known to you and some, perhaps, are not. It is nevertheless essential that all of them be served as respected guests. The weather is cold, so serve them tea; no one should feel any discomfort. I have full faith in you that you will look after the guests and make them feel comfortable. Serve all of them very well. If it is cold inside any house, arrange for coal or for wood to be delivered." (5)

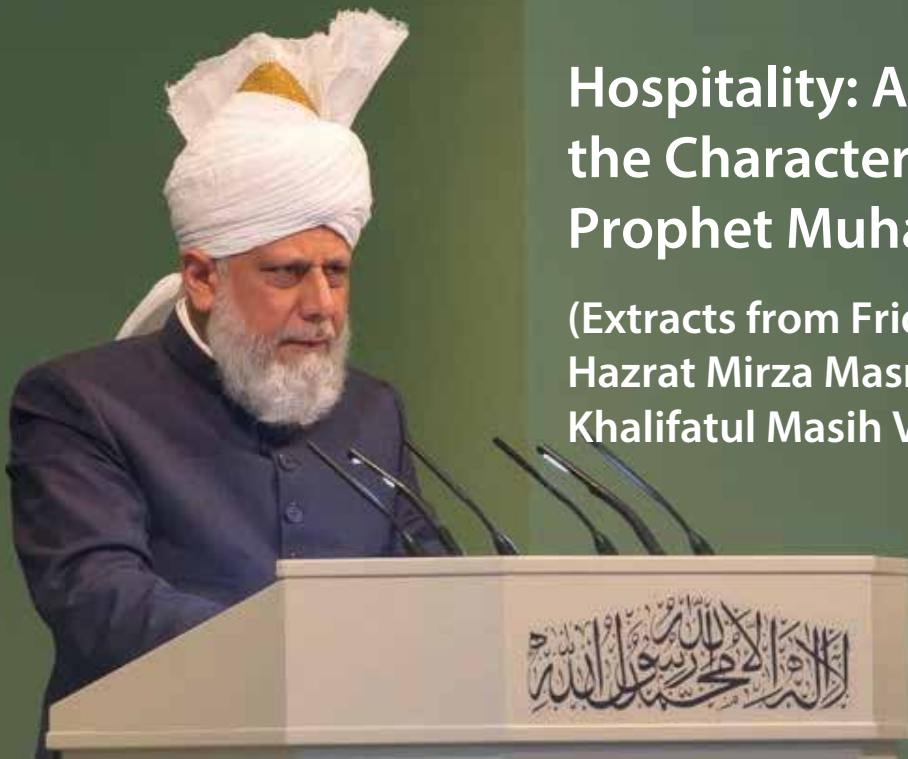
Once, a guest by the name of Syed Habibullah, came to visit the Promised Messiah (as). Addressing him, the Promised Messiah (as) said: "Today I was not feeling well, and I was not able to come out (of my home), but when I was informed about your arrival, I thought that the guest who has taken the trouble to come here has rights. Therefore, I have come out to fulfil those rights." (6)

References:

1. Victory of Islam, page 15, Islam International Publications Ltd., 2002
2. Malfoozat, vol. 5, pages 406-407
3. Malfoozat, vol.7, page 220
4. Malfoozat, vol. 6, page 119
5. Malfoozat, vol. 6, page 226
6. Malfoozat, vol. 9, page 208

Hospitality: A Beautiful Feature of the Character of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (sa)

(Extracts from Friday Sermon delivered by Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih V (aba), on July 22, 2005)



Hospitality is one of the noblest attributes of all the Prophets of God. Allah the Exalted says that on the arrival of his honored guests, the first thing Hazrat Abraham (as) did was to go quickly to his house and bring a roasted fattened calf

He did not ask his guests if they had come from far or near, whether they were hungry or not, or whether they would eat or not. He immediately went inside his house and had food prepared for them. This is how Allah's chosen ones honor their guests.

The Holy Prophet Muhammad (sa), who, according to Allah the Exalted, possesses the most noble qualities of all the Prophets, and is the best of the Messengers, set the highest standards of hospitality, unseen anywhere else. Even before the time of his prophet hood, the Holy Prophet (sa) impressed others with his characteristic hospitality. When he received his first revelation, he came home feeling extremely worried, and told his wife Hazrat Khadijah (ra) about his anxiety. And how did she respond? It is narrated that she said, "By God! It will not happen the way you are thinking, Allah the Exalted will never humiliate you. You look after your relatives; always speak the truth; help remove the burden of others; perform endless good deeds; you offer hospitality and you help the people when they suffer under natural disasters." (1)

The Holy Prophet (sa) re-established the good qualities that had vanished from the world, including hospitality.

Allah loves these very attributes. Then how is it possible that Allah would let a man with such high morals go to waste? Hospitality is so valuable that it causes a servant of God to obtain nearness to Him and win His pleasure.

To further illustrate the subject, I am going to give some examples of the Prophet's (sa) hospitality that he set as a model for us through his personal conduct. Upon the arrival of a guest at his house, whatever was available, he used to offer it. If someone visited the Holy Prophet (sa) and he happened to be eating at that time, he would readily share his food with his guest, regardless of the amount of food available. It is narrated that after offering Prayers in the Mosque, one Companion accompanied the Prophet (sa) to the front door of his house. The Holy Prophet (sa) went inside and after a little while brought some food and asked his Companion to eat. The food was so little in quantity that the Companion felt hesitant to eat. The Holy Prophet (sa) said that it looked as if he had come to discuss some matter with him. The Companion told him why he had accompanied him, and then left. Thus, whoever accompanied him to his house, he used to ask him to come inside and offered him all the food that was available.

Whenever a large number of guests arrived, the Prophet (sa) would ask his Companions to accommodate some guests and he would always take some of the guests home himself. Abdullah bin Taufa happened to be one of the guests who accompanied the Holy Prophet (sa) to his house. He relates that the Holy Prophet (sa) asked

Hazrat Aisha (ra) if there was anything to eat in the house. She replied, "The meal I have prepared for you." The Holy Prophet (sa) asked for the food in a dish, took some food and ate it and asked his guests to start eating by invoking Allah's name. Hazrat Abdullah bin Taufu (ra) states that they did not look at how much they ate. The same was done with the drink that was prepared by Hazrat Aisha (ra) for the Holy Prophet (sa). First, he himself drank a little, and then gave it to his guests. The Prophet (sa) did not eat or drink first because he thought it was his right to do so; he did so because he knew that the food and drink would be blessed by Allah through his prayers and would become sufficient for his guests. Then he asked them where they would like to sleep. They chose to sleep in the Mosque. The next morning the Holy Prophet (sa) came to the Mosque and woke them up for Prayers. Thus to wake a Muslim guest in the morning for Prayers is also a part of hospitality.

The Prophet (sa) was well aware that some of his followers used to pass through phases of severe starvation when there was insufficient food. The Holy Prophet (sa) himself experienced this kind of hunger more than anyone else. There were some poor Companions who stayed with him permanently. So, whenever food came for the Holy Prophet (sa), he would invite all his followers whom he knew were hungry. The Prophet (sa) always made sure that the guests never felt that they were being watched while they were eating, and he would often eat slowly with them so they would not feel embarrassed. Hazrat Maqdad bin Aswad (ra) narrates that he and two of his friends came to the Holy Prophet (sa). All three Companions were suffering from weak eyesight and they were hard of hearing due to affliction and hunger. The Holy Prophet (sa) took them to his house where there were three goats. He told them to milk the goats and to drink it. They used to drink the milk and whatever was leftover, they would give it to the Holy Prophet (sa). Another narration is that whenever someone sent some food or gift to the Holy Prophet (sa), he would first call those who were staying with him permanently.

Once a non-believer came to see the Holy Prophet (as) and such was his hospitality that he asked someone to bring goat's milk for the guest; the non-believer drank all of it. Then he drank the milk of a second goat, and kept on drinking till he finished drinking to his fill of seven goats. The next morning he accepted Islam as he so was

impressed with the Holy Prophet's (sa) hospitality. At another time, a Christian came to see the Holy Prophet (sa); he ate so much that he soiled the bed and felt so embarrassed that he left quietly at night. However, he had forgotten his gold cross and came back to pick it up. He saw the Holy Prophet (sa) himself washing the soiled bed. On seeing this, he became a Muslim.

The Holy Prophet (sa) also advised his followers on how he expected them to treat their guests. The followers of the Holy Prophet (sa) used to fully discharge their duties as hosts. On one occasion a guest arrived and one of the Companions volunteered to take him to his home and then asked his wife to prepare food. As there was insufficient food, they put their children to bed hungry and turned off the lamp. They pretended to eat alongside the guest so that he would not feel embarrassed knowing that he ate all the food by himself. The next morning when this Companion came to see the Holy Prophet (sa), the Holy Prophet (sa) told him that Allah was much pleased with his conduct.

May Allah give us the capability to look after our guests to the best of our ability so they suffer no hardship, Amin.

References:

- 1 Bukhari, Book of Altafseer, Hadith No: 4953



Hospitality in Islam

Mazher Ahmad

Based on Ahadith of the Holy Prophet (sa)

A weary traveler shifts through the desert sand, alone, hungry and wanting for rest. He approaches a small modest hut on the outskirts of town unable to go any further due to exhaustion from his day's journey. With a shameful knock on the door he seeks to not draw attention to himself but rather hopes for an inhabitant who won't mock or throw him to the streets. A man emerges, fatigued from his day of labor, opening the door and inquiring as to who could be calling at an hour when most people were preparing for their evening meals and rest. After a few brief words, the modest home opens and the journeyman enters, a stranger no more in a strange land.

As the story goes, the owner of the modest abode proceeds to welcome the stranger into his home and informs his wife of the situation. His wife begins to explore what food might be available to serve this unplanned guest given they often spend evenings with very little to eat for themselves. After informing her husband that they in fact do not have enough food for their guest and themselves. The host tells his wife to prepare whatever food was available. As the family sits with their guests for the evening meal, they turn off their lamp and fill the visitor's plate with the food they normally would have eaten themselves. They themselves go hungry that evening, unknowing that their deeds would set forth a lifelong example of what the new standard for hospitality would be for all of mankind.

This famous story of Abu Talha (ra) and his wife, Umm Salami (ra), two devout early Muslims, continues as the next day, the Prophet of Islam, Muhammad, (sa) shared with them the glad tidings that Allah Almighty revealed a verse from the Qur'an honoring their actions:

"And those who had established their home in this city before them and had accepted faith, love those who came to them for refuge, and find not in their breasts any desire for that which is given them (Refugees), but prefer the Refugees to themselves, even though poverty be their own lot. And whoso is rid of the covetousness of his own soul — it is these who will be successful." (1)

This verse from the Holy Qur'an clearly lays the foundation for the essence of hospitality as demonstrated by pious Muslims; however, the ultimate example of hospitality was

captured in the life of the Prophet of Islam himself. According to a narration, Hazrat Abu Shareeh Kaa'bi (ra) reported a saying of the Prophet Muhammad (sa):

"He who believes in the existence of Allah and the Day of Judgment must respect his guests. It is his duty to arrange an extravagant feast for his guest for one day and one night followed by three days of generous hospitality. Any favor he does for his guest after that is deemed as charity. A guest should not extend his stay to such long periods which pose a threat to the host's family of becoming impoverished." (2)

Upon considering the verse of the Qur'an alongside the saying of the Prophet of Islam (sa), the rights of the guests are an essential ingredient to the ultimate belief in Allah Himself and his powerful Day of Judgment. In other words, it is such an imperative mandate to honor ones guests that one cannot claim to be a believer if he denies these rights. Furthermore, the Prophet of Islam (sa) goes on to elaborate the specific manner in which one is to honor guests. Just as Abu Talha (ra) and his wife provided their guest with a feast for the one night, so too are Muslims guided to do so. As we reflect more deeply on the wisdom of this guidance, it continues to align with the ultimate mandate of a Muslim, namely to submit his own selfish needs for the sake of others and ultimately for the pleasure of Allah. By requiring a host throw a feast for at least one day and one night, Islam strives to create a society where even complete strangers are treated with the highest level of respect.

Consider for a moment, the level of relationships this behavior would foster in communities across the world. In an age, where people often do not even speak with strangers, a radical change would occur by creating a system where people were welcoming and accommodating of each other's needs. In addition to the first day and night of treatment, the guidance of the Prophet of Islam (sa) continues to extend to three days, to ensure that a guest is adequately taken care of for the duration of his stay.

This wisdom, however, does not end with the obligations of the host alone. The guest also is required to act in a manner that does not pose a burden on the host. If the guest follows these teachings, he too would understand that imposing on another family may lead them to experience financial and emotional hardships. In countries where often large families live in small spaces, the addition of one more guest may place great burden on the homemaker to have to provide for the one additional individual. Islam, always striving to create a balanced approach to social dealings, therefore, provides clear direction.

As we further consider the life of the Prophet of Islam (sa) on a larger scale, his hospitality extended beyond just the micro encounters of dealing with individuals within the home setting. As he assumed greater and greater control of the lands of Medina and ultimately re-conquered his hometown of Mecca, he could have created a vengeful atmosphere where all of his staunch enemies could have been destroyed due to the atrocities they had committed to the Muslim community. Instead, by following the teachings and commandments of Allah, his sense of hospitality stemmed from his deeper sense of forgiveness, and as the Qur'an taught, a removal of the stinginess of one's soul. In short, through these sorts of actions, whether a host or a guest, by following the teachings of the Holy Qur'an and the sayings of the Prophet of Islam (sa), one moves closer in his ultimate journey, which is that of reaching a deeper connection with Allah, and bringing a deeper sense of peace in the world.



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References:

- 1 The Holy Qur'an, 59:10
- 2 Sahih al-Bukhari, Chapter: 73 (Al-Adab (Good Manners and Form)): No: 156

The Practice of Hospitality among the Companions (ra) of the Prophet Muhammad (sa) and of the Promised Messiah (as)

Attiya Ghani

Hospitality is not a superficial characteristic of Islam. Any worldly person of good morals can be hospitable; however, when he is hospitable purely for the sake of Allah, beyond his capacity, and not just for his own personal guests or relatives, rather he does it selflessly just to attain the pleasure and nearness of his Lord, certainly such hospitality earns twice as much reward with Allah, the Almighty. As it is stated in the Holy Qur'an:

"And for those who has established their homes in this City and had accepted the Faith before them. They love those who come to them for refuge, and find not in their breasts any desires for that which is given them (the Refugees), but give preference to the Refugees above themselves, even though poverty be their own lot. Whoso is rid of the covetousness of his own soul -it is these who will be successful." (1)

These words elaborate a great spirit of self-sacrifice, hospitality, and goodwill of the Ansar- the helpers and the Companions (ra) of the Holy Prophet (sa). The Muhajirin (refugees) who migrated from Mecca to Medina, were deprived of all their possessions, and the Ansar welcomed them with open hearts and made them equal partners in their belongings. This was the bond of love and brotherhood which was established by the Holy Prophet (sa) between Muhajirin (refugees) from Mecca and the Ansar (helpers) of Medina. This magnificent verse provides a passionate testimony, and it stands ideally unmatched in the entire history of mankind's relationships.

The Companions (ra) of the Holy Prophet (sa) were the people who had sacrificed everything for the sake of learning religion. In this regard, Hazrat Abu Hurairah (ra) relates, "Once a traveler came to the Holy Prophet (sa). The Holy Prophet (sa) sent a message home to send some food for the guest. The reply came that there is nothing in the house today except water. Upon receiving the reply, the Holy Prophet (sa) asked the Companions (ra), 'Who will arrange to feed this traveler?' One Ansari said he would make the arrangement. So he went home and told his wife to host a guest of the Holy Prophet (sa). The wife said that there is only some food for the children in the house. The Ansari said to her to prepare the food and

when the time to serve the food comes, to light a lamp and take the children and put them to bed. So, the wife prepared the food and lit the lamp and put the children to sleep hungry; she then got up in pretense of fixing the lamp and instead put it out. The husband and wife sat with the guest and pretended to be eating with the guest. In the morning when that Ansari presented himself before the Holy Prophet (sa), The Holy Prophet (sa) smiled and said that even Allah smiled upon seeing your plan and its execution last night and Allah was well pleased by this action of you both last night." (2) It was on this occasion that this verse was revealed, "...but prefer the refugees to themselves, even though poverty be their own lot. And whoso is rid of the covetousness of his own soul — it is these who will be successful." (3) So, these were guests who had come to meet the Holy Prophet (sa). But a huge sacrifice was offered by a Companion who put his children to sleep hungry and fed the guest. Apparently, this might seem like an excess that the children were kept hungry but in fact it presents an inspiring example of sacrifice and hospitality, established in such a way that the whole family joined in.

The true Islamic civility about hospitality is to serve the guests with cheerfulness. These features of hospitality of our dear Holy Prophet (sa) are familiar but each time they are related a new aspect is highlighted. Huzoor (sa) used to inquire from the guests how they found the hospitality extended by the Companions (ra). On one such occasion a guest said, "O Prophet of God, they gave us soft bedding to sleep on and quality food to eat and they also educated us about the Book and Sunnah." (4) These are the obligations of a host. The Holy Prophet (sa) always made sure to perform the task of hospitality in a most excellent way. And along with food, and comfort, the guests acquired some spiritual sustenance from his Companions (ra) as well.

We see the excellent model of honoring of guests by the Holy Prophet (sa) and we know that his true and ardent devotee, the Promised Messiah (as), also paid great attention to this aspect of pleasing Allah. Hazrat Promised Messiah (as) always emphasized that it is not only a commandment of Allah, but it is also a Sunnah of the Holy Prophet (sa) and our Lord commands us to put Sunnah in practice. Advising us regarding the same subject, the Promised Messiah (as) said, "Look, many

guests have arrived. Some you know and recognize and others you do not. So, the proper thing for you is to show humility and consider everyone worthy of respect and honor. I am positively inclined towards you all and trust that you provide every comfort for the guests. Do serve them all to the best of your abilities.” (5)

We need to keep in mind the following words of the Promised Messiah (as), as they are full of wisdom. If we pay heed to them, all our affairs will turn out for the better: “The heart of a guest is very fragile like a piece of glass and apt to break upon the slightest rough treatment.” (6) Therefore, as followers of the Imam of this age, it is incumbent upon us that we respect our guests.

Hazrat Khairuddin (ra), one of the Companions (ra) of the Promised Messiah (as), related that the task of hospitality which was entrusted to him was executed in a most excellent way. He relates that, “He arrived at Qadian from his village. The Promised Messiah (as) was sitting in his Gol Kamra (name of a room) having a meal. He welcomed Khairuddin Sahib (ra) and asked him to join him. Khairuddin Sahib (ra) said he had already eaten but the Promised Messiah (as) insisted that he have something to eat. The Promised Messiah (as) had finished his meal but he served food to Khairuddin Sahib (ra). Hazrat Khalifatul Masih II (ra) was a young boy at the time and was also eating with them. The Promised Messiah (as) placed his plate in front of Khairuddin Sahib. Soon after, another Companion started clearing the plates and in haste picked up Khairuddin Sahib’s plate as well. When the Promised Messiah (as) saw this, he reprimanded the Companion most harshly. Khairuddin Sahib (ra) says he did not have the strength to say that he had eaten to his fill. The Promised Messiah (as) said that unless he said so, the dinner utensils should not be cleared. (7) It was in his mind that the sentiments of any guest should never be hurt and courtesy should be shown at every instance.

There are other examples in the life of the Promised Messiah (as) where, in compliance with the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet (sa), he also sacrificed his own comfort for the sake of hospitality for others, e.g., spending winter nights without any warm bedding, using his wife, Hazrat Amman Jan’s (ra) jewelry to obtain cash for food for guests. This is the level of sacrifice which Huzoor (as) had and can also be seen among his companions (ra).

Our Lord has informed us in the Holy Qur’an by giving the example of Prophets and their Companions (ra), how to serve guests. The greeting of a guest should be responded to with a warmer and heartier greeting and good wishes should be conveyed to him and he should be made to feel safe and secure and delight should be expressed to him. The Holy Prophet (sa) who understood and practiced Divine commandments more than anyone else has guided us that we have an obligation to serve our guests.

Moreover, hospitality provides us with the means to develop mutual love as well as to make an impression on others and bring them closer to Islam Ahmadiyyat, thus opening ways of Tabligh. Allah, the Almighty had informed the Promised Messiah (as) that people would come to him in their droves and when people come to a strange place, they are guests. Hospitality in general and hospitality of the guests of the Promised Messiah (as) should be considered Divine grace and for this, services should be offered and executed with heightened fervor. May Allah enable us to fulfill our responsibilities so that when we are called to account in front of Allah, we are among those who carried out all duties fully throughout our lives, Amin.

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Public Kitchen of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian (as)

Andleeb Shams Ahmed

In most religions, hospitality for guests is of the utmost importance in God's eyes. Islam too stresses the blessings equated with the receiving and treating of guests. The Holy Quran states, "Has the story reached you of the honored guests of Abraham? Behold, they entered his presence and said: 'Salam (peace be upon you)! He answered: 'Peace!' (And thought 'They seem unusual people'). Then he turned quickly to his household, brought out a roasted fattened calf, and placed it before them. He said: 'Will you not eat?'" (1)

In recent times, guests are sometimes considered to be an inconvenience or even a burden. But Islam and Ahmadiyyat both stress the importance of good hospitality and the blessings received from doing so. This is why the Promised Messiah(as) of Ahmadiyyat not only abided by God's rules, or even followed in the example of Prophet Muhammad(sa) and his generosity and passion for treating guests with the utmost respect, but he took it even further by starting the Langar Khana system in Ahmadiyyat. A Langar is a place where free food is cooked in large cauldrons and distributed to guests.

Through revelations, God had informed the Promised Messiah(as) that people would come to him in their droves and when people come to you (especially to a strange place), they are God's guests. He received other revelations many times from God that people would come to him in their multitudes and that he should not be annoyed nor tire of meeting them. The revelation given to him also alluded to the growth of the Ahmadiyyat community in terms of numbers, as well as the development and enhancement of the sincerity and dedication of the people of this community. Moreover, a great number of "truth seekers" shall also continue to come and thus hospitality will continue to increase and grow. The Promised Messiah(as) initiated the Langar Khana for this very purpose and called it an important matter among other important

matters. He stressed the importance of this for his time and the magnitude of how fast and how big this will be in the future, after he's gone. Today, wherever the Ahmadiyyat community is established, there is a Langar Khana in operation.

The Promised Messiah(as) not only started the Langar system, but he gave detailed instructions to those who looked after guests. From food service at the Langar Khana to non-discriminatory treatment of all guests to informing them of the whereabouts of sleeping and/or restroom facilities, he would illustrate to his companions the fine points of hospitality that he wished to extended to all of his guests, all while knowing his companions would continue this after he was gone from this world. There are many, many incidents that can illustrate his kindness and generosity extended toward any guests who came to him. There are many stories from his companions that describe incidents that expounded his most excellent hospitality. It should be noted that most of his guests during his lifetime came from quite far. Since there were no airplanes, cars, or trains then either, people spent a minimum of a few days to sometimes months to travel just to visit him. These examples ranged from the



Promised Messiah(as) going to great lengths to cater for even eccentric habits of the guests like: chewing paan (leaves filled with areca nuts, sweet or savory flavorings), personally opening doors for his guests despite other people around him who could do themselves, personally serving food to his guests at early hours of the morning, giving away his own bedding due to need for guests and doing all of this in the most cordial and gracious manner. His advice to people with regards to serving guests was: "You recognize some people and do not recognize others, therefore, consider each one of them worthy of the same hospitality." (2)

As Ahmadiyyat began to grow, so did the Langar Khana. Most noticeably, the Langars at the annual conventions for all nations (which has increased rapidly and widely all over the world) have also had to increase dramatically. These conventions, also known as Jalsas, were also foretold to the Promised Messiah(as). "Your helpers will come from every distant track." (3) He initiated these Jalsas for the enhancement of spirituality and religion. Therefore, it was the obligation of the workers of these Jalsas, who were ALL volunteers, to serve the guests in every best way possible, which has been carried on until even today. The Jalsas and the operations of the Langar Khana have always greatly impressed people, especially those from outside the Ahmadiyyat community. All due to the great impressions left on guests who were blessed to have been served graciously by the Promised Messiah(as) personally and/or his Langar Khana.

The Promised Messiah(as) was so adamant about the special treatment every guest should receive from him or any person from his community, that if he were to see any discrepancies, he would take matters into his own hands. During his lifetime, he obviously faced a lot of criticism and harsh verbal attacks of either his character or his community in general. His son Hazrat Musleh Maud(ra), the second Khalifa of Ahmadiyyat, had stated that it was bad enough being subjected to non-Muslim criticisms and vulgar abuses, but his father was also sometimes subjected to these type of attacks by fellow Muslims or even fellow Ahmadis (ones who left the community right away after accepting it, due to propagation from other Muslim sects). These were people who were not part of the community anymore and had the habit of thinking ill of their once-believed brothers.

They complained openly that the Promised Messiah spent Langar Khana funds for his personal use. He came to know of this in his last days and told his son that these people so wrongly imagine that he uses these funds for himself and/or for his own family. "They do not know that I even spend on Langar the money that people give to me as offerings." Now, at that time, it was actually this very son of his that managed all of the Promised Messiah's money orders and finances, so he knew how little the Langar funds were nor could the funds have sustained the running of the Langar. The Promised Messiah said that had he left the running of his Langar Khana to the people who were unduly critical, they would not have been able to manage it. And surely, this did indeed happen and his Langar Khana operated in the red for a long period. In addition to this, the Langar expenses kept increasing mainly because guests in large numbers kept coming to see him. But by the virtue of the truthfulness of the Promised Messiah, his own prayers, and God's blessings for him and his followers, the situation improved and now Langar operates all around the world most successfully. (4)



The Promised Messiah(as) was so true in his passion for the best hospitality and for his Langar to continue to serve his guests that even if he saw any misconduct happening, he would not shy away from correcting the problem. In fact, he would even make it a point to be made that people know how God considers this to be a grievous wrongdoing. Once during the time of the Promised Messiah(as) and due to management mistakes, guests were not served food properly. God informed him of this and the Promised Messiah(as) said that God told him that during the previous night, there was hypocrisy in serving food to the guests. The Promised Messiah(as) dismissed those specific Langar workers for six months before letting them come back and resume this volunteer work. In spite of his gentle and quiet nature, he did not tolerate deficiency or hypocrisy when it came to serving his guests. He then personally overlooked the Langar operations. He said the hospitality department and Langar Khana need to be very careful in not just feeding all of their guests, but in also making sure there are never any complaints made against them in any shape or form. (5)

Now this Langar of the Promised Messiah(as) is established all over the world and is operational in many places permanently, under the supervision of the Khalifa. Langar Khana is an important branch of the mission of the Promised Messiah(as), which is why it is the task of every single Ahmadi to be responsible for their local Langars, serving guests, and to pay attention to the catering of every guest. The Khalifa today is grateful for all of the hard workers of volunteers who help run the Langars on a daily basis in largely Ahmadi populated areas and those who operate the Langar at the annual conventions throughout the world. It is a grace of God that He has instilled this passion in young men and women today to help keep the Langars running so successfully. It is also stressed that in no way at all should there be any wastefulness and there should be proper planning in this regard, however, there should be no miserliness in any way because this is not your Langar, it is the Langar of the Promised Messiah(as) which by the grace of God still runs today and operates successfully for all of God's and our guests.



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Blessings of Hospitality at Annual Conventions

Rabia Salim

An Ahmadiyya Muslim Convention, otherwise known as 'Jalsa', is a massive event and a gathering of Ahmadi Muslims for a spiritual weekend. In the hometown of the Promised Messiah, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (as) in Qadian, India, it has a special significance as the first ever Jalsa was held here. Picture the holy personage of the founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, presenting a single guest who would arrive in Qadian with a glass of milk at his door at night. My grandparents and parents told me such stories many times as a child. Now when you think of the Jalsa in Qadian, it is a large number of guests of the Promised Messiah all flocking to honor their oath and renew their faith in the revival of Islam. The concept of hospitality in Islam is exhibited during Jalsa on a large scale.



The worldwide spiritual leader of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community and the Caliph, His Holiness Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad (aba) delivers many Friday sermons about this topic in accordance to the country where the Jalsa is being held. He delivered a particular one in December 2015 (1) when the Jalsa was being hosted in Qadian. His Holiness reminded us that the Jalsa in Qadian at the time of the Promised Messiah (as) was relatively small. The last one in his blessed lifetime had 700 attendees. This was an increase from the earlier ones that had around 200 people sitting on a rug, and the devotion of the followers during these earlier times was of those keen on the attitude of sacrifice. At one occasion when the Promised Messiah (as) went for a walk, 700 people devotedly followed him, so much so that every few steps, his shoe would come off his foot, and somebody would have to help him put it back on. It was during these Jalsas that the Promised Messiah (as) would personally involve himself with the arrangement of feeding the guests. 'Langar Khana' are the blessed kitchens of the Ahmadi Muslims around the world, started by the humble but plentiful one in Qadian.

There are also many other times the present Caliph addresses hospitality either before or at the start of the Jalsa in England where he resides, and in European and North American countries. These Jalsas are held in marquees erected for the event, or held in large centers.

UK Jalsa is a massive temporary set up of a small 'village' with marquees in a town called Alton. Last year at the UK Jalsa (2) His Holiness said that even though workers strive to do hospitality justice, guests should also understand there are bound to be difficulties when providing temporary arrangements and accept the difficulties with an open heart and to be grateful. It would be a loss to the guest to come with this thinking that they will receive lavish drinks and meals and come only for those things. He alluded to the fact that in Rabwah, Pakistan and Qadian, India, where the Jalsas are held in open air, guests stay seated even in rain and in cold weather. He received a complaint last year from the women at the UK Jalsa that there should be air conditioning in the marquees. However, he reminded them that due to the scale of the event arranging for air conditioning or fans is not easy. So the participants should be ready to deal with small hardships and our prayer should be to seek God's mercy, forgiveness, help and protection from calamities and evils in this temporary shelter. We should also take care of the very young children who may get sick as their immune system is not well established. At night, when it gets colder, some parents arrived with their children to the marquees. As there was a shortage of blankets, the mothers wrapped themselves and their children in the one blanket they brought. They would not move their children because they wanted to keep them in the environment of the Jalsa. Some women came with children as young as 9 or 10 months. These mothers are willing to make such sacrifices and want their children to become resilient. They do not even ask for any comfort as they want their children to be strong. Due to their suffering His Holiness (aba) was concerned and drew the administration's attention to set up enough bedding and mattresses the following day, just as the Promised Messiah (as) would have paid attention to his guests.

I will explore further advice for UK Jalsas since the Caliph resides there. In another sermon delivered on August 22, 2014 (3) His Holiness (aba) reiterated that the host should remember that around half the guests are from a town other than London, and even some elderly who are traveling from

London are undergoing an arduous journey. He reminded the workers on how heartily and warmly we should greet our guests in order to make them feel at ease. Further, he drew attention to the fact that many guests attending are not Ahmadi Muslims therefore, they should feel completely safe and secure during their visit. His Holiness (aba) reminded the audience that hospitality was a firm practice of the Holy Prophet (sa) and how the Promised Messiah (as) and his companions followed this practice too in the footsteps of Prophet Muhammad (sa).

Once, a companion of the Promised Messiah (as) was repeatedly sleeping on the floor to accommodate guests, so they could use his bedstead. He asked his companion why he was sleeping on the floor because it was rainy season in Qadian and snakes and scorpions could drift into the house. The companion explained the situation to his master and upon hearing this, the Promised Messiah (as) sent him another bedstead and sure enough, one by one, the companion let a guest take each bedstead that was sent to him. The Promised Messiah (as) praised this action as it was what he wanted Ahmadi Muslims to do.

His Holiness, Mirza Masroor Ahmad (aba) gave some advice to the members at Germany Jalsa (4). He made the point that as more and more members join the community in Germany, naturally, the need for hospitality will also grow. He reiterated that food served at the Jalsa should be to the guests' liking, and should also be served with respect. The food handler should be mindful of the hot weather in order to maintain the proper quality. Meal should not be served if there is any chance that it will make the consumers sick. His Holiness (aba) gave many practical points in this sermon to the German administration for their betterment because the Promised Messiah (as) used to go after guests if they were displeased in any way towards the workers who served food at the 'Langar Khana'.



As a tradition, His Holiness recaps the blessed Jalsa in his Friday Sermons also. After the conclusion of the Jalsa this is the time when he thanks all the volunteers for their dedicated work to host and be hospitable and he also reviews the guests' impressions and the administration's overall efforts. We are commanded to thank people because this gratitude also leads to thankfulness to God. The volunteers in these days are also responsible for many other tasks from before the event, such as broadcasting and audio/visual. One year he noticed the overall fatigue on the youths' faces from lack of sleep but he commended them because they worked efficiently despite of their exhaustion. This was also the year when there was a concern of swine flu in the UK area spreading faster due to the large gathering. His Holiness (aba) instructed all to take a homeopathic preventative remedy and every day fifteen to twenty kilograms of the medicine were used.

One lady refused medicine from a volunteer, and when the volunteer asked her if she would willingly refuse the Caliph of the time, she promptly took the remedy. In that year, by the Grace of God in a gathering of thousands, only 3 or 4 cases of the flu were reported which confirms how God's blessings are with the Ahmadi Muslims (5).

As for the next year's event, after the review, and evaluation by all departments, planning starts immediately to ensure a good experience for all. The actual set up of the temporary Jalsa sites, including marquees, water, bathroom facilities, and food equipment are commenced a month or two prior to the event, but planning committees start meeting well before that. An interesting fact is that the Caliph has his blessed hand in all planning and arrangements. Since His Holiness resides in the UK he is able to visit the Jalsa site in person. He is given a tour of the various departments and meets the volunteers. Last year a fascinating Shroud of Turin exhibition and Al Qalam project (production of a hand written copy of the Holy Quran by men, women and children of the community) were also initiated. Many guests report feeling a sense of peace and love at the site, especially where the Caliph

graces the event. Finally, the volunteer nature of this operation is incomparable, and what's amazing is the pleasure and cooperation of the volunteers to carry on completing the work which is another sign of God's blessings.

In Islam hospitality and the sentiments of our guests are a way to receive God's pleasure. The guest should also be patient and courteous; however the most should be achieved to gain the guest's happiness and comfort. To understand and experience the extent of hospitality, we invite our readers to attend the Jalsa at a city near them.



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Hospitality - a Path to Spiritual Growth

Anser Ahmad

Introduction

For most people hospitality is a duty, something that imposes a claim on our attention from the outside. In contrast to empathy, which is a feeling or emotion, hospitality is an event or action. It is going out of our comfort zone to offer comfort, most often of food and lodging, to another. Practicing hospitality is not something we can appoint another person to do for us, nor is it a set of techniques or behaviors we “use” on new people. Rather, it is an individual work of intentional action, action that creates the quality of relationships in us.

But when practiced the correct way, hospitality becomes something quite different, it can become a spiritual practice. Ideally, when undertaken for the right reasons, it provides mutual beneficence to the guest as well as the host, often leading the host to a path of spiritual self-discovery.

Hospitality is Not a Quality, But a Journey

The Sufi poet, Hafiz, states, “Everything is sacred.” In this way, even the act of providing food or shelter for another should be viewed as sacred. It is easy to imagine that our spiritual journey in life is something outside our daily life. But in fact, our spiritual journey is shaped by our daily life, by the actions we take. If we choose to help others by being hospitable, this in itself shapes our very being. Likewise, if we remain closed off and uninviting, it affects our spiritual persona more than it affects our guest.

The Zen teacher, Uchiyama, once observed, “Everything you encounter is yourself.” Because we believe other people exist only outside of us, we forget that our experience of them is always a personal experience. We see them through the filters of our idiosyncratic experience, beliefs, and senses. The resulting picture becomes a combination of who they are and of who we are. In this sense, we are part of everything that we encounter.

Therefore the journey of hospitality is simultaneously outward and inward. The host, in treating his guest, is discovering something about himself. We are both



Kosho Uchiyama Zen teacher

giving and receiving at the same time. Zen Buddhists believe, “As I greet you, I also greet myself. I am not doing this act for your sake only. In fact I should be grateful to you for giving me the opportunity to move deeper into my life, to align my actions with my deepest values, and to encounter the mystery of life in this moment.” The traditional hierarchy dissolves into something more equalitarian, and so the “duty” of offering hospitality becomes an opportunity.

Even today, among Indians of all faiths, whether Buddhist, Hindu or Jain, there is a common saying: “atithi devo bhavah”, or “the guest is god.” In India, this phrase is also commonly used by complete strangers when they meet someone unexpectedly. They believe that the manner in which one treats a guest speaks volumes about one’s relationship with the divine. One can see why in the Indian culture, hospitality plays such an important role, and why Indians are considered one of the most hospitable people.

Three Stages of Hospitality

In Islam, three stages of human relationships are discussed in a single verse of the Holy Qur’an: “Indeed Allah requires you to abide by justice, to treat with benevolence and to giving like unto kindred...” (1) In this verse, three aspects of relationships are discussed which can each be related to hospitality. These aspects are as follows:

1. *Adl* (absolute justice)
2. *Ihsan* (to grant someone more than his or her due)
3. *Ita'i Dhil-Qurba* (to treat others with such grace and overwhelming generosity as one would treat one's kindred)

In the realm of hospitality, the first stage is one where justice, or *Adl* is used. We offer hospitality and we receive something in return. For example in the hotel or 'bed and breakfast' industry, in paying the cost of staying in a room, we in return receive hospitality. This constitutes even trade, and so may be considered under *Adl* or justice.



But in Islam the host is encouraged to go beyond *Adl*, and strive for voluntary benevolence (*Ihsan*). This is to offer more than what is due, simply through one's benevolence. Islam then goes one step further, and challenges the believer to move to the third stage of human relationships, which is *Ita'i Dhil-Qurba* (to treat like kindred). In this stage the host, out of a spontaneous expression of love and caring, offers whatever he or she has without expecting anything in return. This can be compared to the manner in which a mother takes care of her child. When a mother loves her child, she does so without any element of design and even without any trace of affectation. It is a natural flow which she does not generate, but one with which she is carried away, stemming from sheer love. Spontaneity is always central to her expression of love for her dear child. That is why this stage, *Ita'i Dhil-Qurba*, is known as treatment of like kindred. In this realm of hospitality, our benevolence is extended in such a manner that we consider it to be our duty or obligation to provide for another, without expecting any favor in return.

Examples of Hospitality Akin to Justice

The stories of prophets offer excellent examples of hospitality. We know of the story of the prophet Moses (as) who fled from the Egyptian authorities after he was warned by a man that he was being sought for the murder of another man. (2) After escaping, and crossing the desert, he ended up in Midian, where Moses (as) prayed, 'My Lord, I am in dire need of whatever good thing You may send me.' (3) It was at that time that he provided assistance to two women who were trying to water their flock. He was then taken to their father who offered hospitality to Moses (as), in allowing him to stay. But the father asked for something in return, 'I would like to marry you to one of these daughters of mine, on condition that you serve me for eight years: if you complete ten, it will be of your own free will. I do not intend to make things difficult for you: God willing, you will find I am a fair man.' Moses (as) said, 'Let that be the agreement between us – whichever of the two terms I fulfill, let there be no injustice to me – may God be witness to what we say.' (4) Here we see a fair trade between the elder farmer and Moses (as): for working for the farmer, Moses (as) in turn was offered hospitality in the form of food, lodging and even a wife.

The Old Testament also orders good treatment and love for strangers. Moreover, it forbids wronging, mistreating and oppressing the stranger. We read the following verse:

"You shall neither mistreat a stranger nor oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt." (5)

Similarly, in sub-continental Africa, many Hijras travel by foot to perform the Hajj in Mecca, Saudi Arabia. Though these people are most often considered social outcasts, many shopkeepers along their path of travel routinely give them food and lodging. When asked why, the shopkeepers often respond with comments such as, "You never know what external form souls take when they appear before you" or "they may be angels in disguise." The shopkeepers believe that in offering hospitality, the Hijras will pray for them, and so the shopkeepers in turn will receive blessings through their acts of hospitality.

Hospitality in Granting Someone More Than What is Due to Them:

The Arabic word for hospitality is *Diyafa*, stemming from the word *afdaf* which means "furnishing the guest with accommodation." *Diyafa* also signifies honor, bravery, manhood, character and other noble traits and virtues.

The Holy Prophet Muhammad (sa) spoke of the high status bestowed on a person who treats his guest well: "Let the believer in God and the Day of Judgment honor his guest." Honoring, or treating a guest well is coupled with two of the

most important beliefs in Islam, belief in God and belief in the Day of Judgment. In Islam, the hospitality relationship is triangular; it consists of host, guest, and God. Hospitality is therefore viewed as a right of the guest rather than a gift, and the duty to supply it, is a duty to God.

The Holy Qur'an states, "Righteousness is not that you turn your faces toward the east or the west, but [true] righteousness is [in] one who believes in Allah, the Last Day, the angels, the Book, and the prophets and gives wealth, in spite of love for it, to relatives, orphans, the needy, the traveler.." (6)

In Islam, hospitality given for the sake of benevolence is a higher spiritual stage than hospitality provided where something is expected in return. This benevolent hospitality is greatly encouraged, where it is done for the sake of pleasing God. Here we give more, and expect less in return, even if what is expected in return are simply blessings.

Whether it is a guest or a traveler, we often invite family or friends into our homes for the sheer company or because we know they require accommodation or have a need. But most often we expect that should we find ourselves in the same situation, whether visiting their home or neighborhood, the same courtesy will be returned to some degree. Therefore, while this stage of hospitality is very noble, and stems from true benevolence, if there is any expectation of like treatment, then it remains under the second stage of Ihsan (to grant someone more than their due, out of sheer benevolence).

The Highest Stage of Hospitality: To Treat Like Kindred

Some companions of the Holy Prophet (sa) exhibited the third and highest stage of hospitality. After the Holy Prophet (sa) migrated from Mecca to Medina, he was followed by numerous other Meccan converts to Islam who were also fleeing Mecca. These were known as the Muhajireen. These refugees were welcomed with open arms by the residents of Medina, who were known as the Ansaar (helpers). The Muhajireen were treated like family: not only were permanent accommodations provided, but all of the needs of the travelers were met, to the extent that they became closer than actual brothers. Such a bond of brotherhood was formed, that it was well beyond benevolence. In many instances the Ansaar offered half of their property and belongings to the Muhajireen, without expecting anything in return. This level of hospitality rose to the level of Ita'i Dhill-Qurba (treating like kindred).

Similarly, other Companions also emulated the ways of Prophet Muhammad (sa). A verse in the Holy Qur'an was revealed highlighting the hospitality shown to a guest by the

Prophet's Companion Abu Talha (ra) and his wife Umm Sulaim (ra). Abu Talha (ra) welcomed a hungry traveler into his home even though he and his wife had very little food to offer. Abu Talha (ra) asked his wife to bring whatever provisions they had and to give it to the guest. As the guest ate his fill, the couple pretended to eat in the dim candlelight even though they had no additional food for themselves. The following day, Prophet Muhammad (sa) gave them the great news that God had revealed a verse about them and their generosity. "...but give them preference over themselves, even though they were in need of that. And whosoever is saved from his covetousness such are they who will be successful." (7)

Here we see examples of treatment of guests that go beyond justice or benevolence, but rise to the level of true brothers and sisters, where the host shows such immense hospitality without expecting any favor in return, similar to the manner in which a mother takes care of her own child.

The Promised Messiah (as) himself was an excellent example of this highest stage of hospitality. His guests did not simply travel for enjoyment, they were in fact, seekers of truth. And simply to win the pleasure of Allah, he himself would go to great limits in the treatment of his guests. He would cater to their various eccentric habits such as chewing the paan (a mixture of areca nut and sometimes tobacco, wrapped in a betel leaf) and personally serving food to them at early hours of the morning. He would personally open doors for his guests despite having other people around him who could do so. He would even give away his own bedding if his guests needed it and, above all, he would execute all of this in a most cordial, gracious manner.

Allah had informed the Promised Messiah (as) that people would come to him in droves. He thus received the revelation that when multitudes of people come to him, he should not grow weary of them. Thus the Promised Messiah (as) initiated

**The Promised
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the Langar Khana (dining hall or communal free kitchen) for providing food for his guests. This later became part of the Ziafat (hospitality) Department of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, the primary purpose of which was to serve the needs of guests of the Khalifa. The Langar Khana has always been free to all of its guests, and therefore it embodies the highest of spiritual goals: to serve those seeking nearness to Allah.

The Heart of a Guest

In regards to hospitality, the Promised Messiah (as) said: "I am always mindful that no guest should be inconvenienced and this is why I always give instructions that as much as it is possible, guests should be afforded comfort. The heart of a guest is fragile like glass and is broken by the slightest of knocks."

What we often fail to realize is the position that a guest is placed in when they arrive at the abode of his host. Not only is the guest unfamiliar with his physical surroundings, he is completely at the mercy of his host. Whether the food is good or inadequate, or whether the accommodations are comfortable or not, the guest has no say. At the same time, if the host is not at peace with himself or is undergoing stress or distractions, the guest will feel it. That is why the Promised Messiah (as) reminds us that "the heart of a guest is fragile like glass." If a guest feels he is unwanted, or is a nuisance to the host, the guest will certainly feel it. And like glass, the feelings of the guest may easily be hurt, which once broken cannot easily be mended.

But if the host views his hospitality towards the guest as an honor, and that it is tied to his faith, then hospitality can rise to a higher level, it can become a spiritual experience, where one is not concerned with receiving anything in return from the guest, but only in winning the pleasure of Allah.

These examples of our righteous predecessors illustrate to what extent they cared for their guests, sometimes to their own personal deprivation. But in treating a guest with kindness or generosity for no reason other than to simply become closer to God, for the host, hospitality can become a spiritual exercise. If we regularly question our own motives, and view the act of hospitality as a sacred task, we will benefit from the experience as much as our guest will benefit from our sacrifice. And so, the more we open our hearts and doors to guests, the more we will progress in our own spiritual journey.

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Hospitality and Welcoming Guests in the Jewish Tradition

Tariq Sharif

“OPEN HOUSE” - Many of us have seen this sign or received an “Open House” invitation, usually to our children’s school, a public institution, or even from a real estate agency to see a house for sale. But the deeper concept of making one’s home a true “Open House” to guests is actually part of the faith of a Jewish person, as well as being an integrated part of the Jewish tradition.

In Judaism, showing hospitality (*hakhsanat orchim*) to guests is considered a virtuous deed or *mitzvah*. In fact, when one knows of a stranger who is hungry or in need of refuge, it becomes an obligation to help. Hospitality is a branch of *chesed* or kindness, which is the most consistent and all-embracing act of faith for a Jew. In fact, a favorite Talmudic name for God is *Rachmana* which means “Compassionate One,” which is similar to one of the Islamic name for the Gracious God, *Rahman*. To mirror God’s attribute of compassion, Jews are taught to be compassionate, kind and hospitable.

Hospitality in the Torah

Hospitality in the Torah (which is also called the Hebrew Bible or Tanakh) begins with an act of God’s kindness, that of clothing Adam and Eve. Therefore, right from the beginning Jews are taught the importance of being kind to others in need. (1) Kindness and hospitality are acts to be constantly practiced, not just read about in holy books. The Jewish sage Rav Huna said “One who busies himself with Torah exclusively is equivalent to one who has no God.” (2)

The Torah contains many examples of hospitality and welcoming guests. For example:

Abraham (as) invites three wanderers from Mamre to relax while he brings them food and water. Later, Abraham’s wife, Rebecca, graciously waters the traveler’s thirsty horses. (3)

Lot (as) risks his life to bring guests into his home



under the disapproving eyes of the Sodomites. (4) A Shunamite woman provides a room for Elisha (as) when he passes through. (5)

These examples illustrate the high place the Jews should hold for being welcoming and hospitable to guests. One of the blessed rewards of hospitality, which Jews derive from several of these stories, is the bearing of children. Both Abraham (as) and the Shunamite woman bore children after their noble acts of hospitality.

One of the most fascinating lessons Jews take from the Torah is that despite the horrific treatment they received from Egyptians under the rule of Pharaoh during Moses’ (as) time, they still must have grati-

tude for being hosted. This should be manifested in two ways: by accepting Egyptians as converts, and by the Messiah accepting a gift which Egypt will offer at the time of his advent. (6)

The Talmud teaches that one's house should always be welcoming and open to strangers. In the Torah it affirms that Abraham always kept all four sides of his tent open, for guests to easily enter. On Passover, for the Seder meal, an invitation should always be made to the hungry and needy.

Jews are taught to practice hospitality cheerfully and within their means. As Rabbi Nathan says, "Lavish hospitality accompanied by a sour disposition means far less than modest hospitality extended cheerfully." (7)

Responsibilities of Guests and Hosts

Who is a guest according to Judaism? To answer that, let us look to the Halacha. Halacha is the body of Jewish law supplementing the scriptural law and forming especially the legal part of the Talmud.

To be considered a guest under Halachic definition, the guest must be sleeping at someone else's home (the host's or someone else's) and must be taking a meal at the host's home. The guest can be rich or poor, although if the guest is poor it also counts as charity or tzedakah, and not just a kindness. If the host accepts payment for hosting a guest, then the virtue is completely lost.

The Gemara portion of the Talmud states that having guests is equal to, or perhaps even greater than, learning Torah. In fact, if one is on their way to learn Torah and a guest arrives, the person should postpone their learning to take care of the guest if no one else is available to do so.

Many of the very practical responsibilities of a host are taken from the story of Abraham (as) as collected by the famous Rabbi, Chofetz Chaim (8) including:

- Offer water for washing
- Offer rest before offering food
- If the guest is in a hurry, do not delay them
- When serving food, bring each dish as it is ready
- Include your children in hospitality
- Walk the guest out



"Chofetz Chaim":
cover page 1873 ed.

Chofetz Chaim collected additional responsibilities of the host from other sources, including:

- Greet your guests with a smile
- Do not burden your guest with your financial problems, lest they feel bad eating your food
- Do not embarrass your guests by watching them eat
- Give your guests your best beds
- Give your guests directions to where they are going
- If possible, designate a guest room in your house
- Trust your wife's opinion as the woman often has a better "read" on guests' needs
- Do not invite someone you know can't come, just to score "points" with them
- Do not assume you can completely trust all guests, so use wisdom in that regard

Despite the extensive obligations of the host, it does not mean the guest has no obligations. Some of the responsibilities of the guest include making sure you are invited and wanted before showing up, not passing an invitation on to other guests without the host's permission (this is called despicable in the Talmud (9), and inquiring about the welfare of the host.

Some other responsibilities of the guest taken from the Talmud include:

- Recognizing the difficulty the host has gone through to host you
- Following all of the directives of the host
- Not causing the host extra work

There is also a special blessing that is required to be recited by a guest in the course of Grace After Meals (Birkat ha-Mazon). The guest is also obliged to leave some food on their plate.

Above all, a guest should show gratitude. The second-century rabbinic sage Shim'on Ben Zoma contrasted the response between two types of guests, one showing gratitude and one not.

Grateful guest: "Look how much this householder has done for me! He has brought me so much meat (i.e. fine, expensive food). How many cakes he has set before me! And all that he has done, he has done just for my benefit." Ungrateful guest: "What has this householder done for me, after all? I've eaten one serving of bread. I've eaten one slice of meat. I've drunk one cup of beverage. And anyway, the work was all done for the host anyway." (10)

In short, hospitality is a religious obligation for those of the Jewish faith, but guests too have responsibilities. When both parties do their best to honor their faith and please God, they earn blessings and build relationships that make the community stronger.

On this final point, hospitality extends from individual families to the community. That is because the community as a whole must meet the obligation of hosting all guests. In other words, if one family does not host a particular guest, some other family will need to step in and take that responsibility. Ideally, the entire community comes together to divvy up the responsibility.

The relationship between guest and host, as well as host and community, highlight how every person is connected together and all people are connected to their Creator.

Author's Note: My parents converted to Islam from Judaism before I was born, but I had the opportunity to observe my Jewish grandparents and other relatives. They were very hospitable, taking pride in hosting others in a kind and generous way. I once had the opportunity to stay with my father's father, and it was one of the highlights of my youth. He was sweet, patient, and always offering guests whatever he had - a few dollars, more to eat, or perhaps a sweet - although due to his diabetes he himself could not partake of sugary foods.

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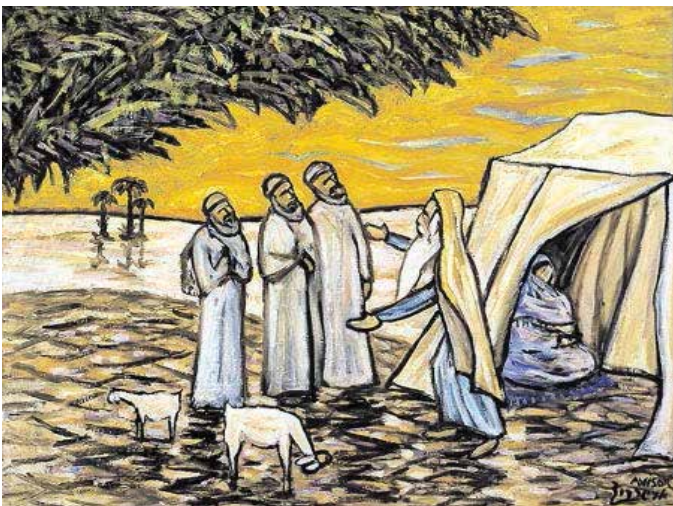
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Abraham's Hospitality

Rabbi Laura Sheinkopf

Genesis 18:1-8 describes the hospitality that Abraham and Sarah offered to three strangers. As it turned out these three strangers came bearing life changing news. The barren couple would indeed have a son and the Jewish People would, as a result endure. The couple's notable hospitality has been venerated from thenceforth. It was common practice to offer a traveler a bit of water and a moment in the shade, but it was not customary to show the kind of hospitality that Abraham and Sarah offered the three strangers who visited them. Abraham was not only welcoming and polite; he was enthusiastically hospitable and Jewish commentators have pointed this out throughout the ages. Abraham did more than offer sustenance. He offered a lavish meal. He did not merely invite these strangers into his tent. He threw himself at their feet and welcomed them as if they were kings not knowing the news that they had brought with them. Thus, the preamble to one of the most pivotal moments in the Torah is a great show of hospitality. As such, being hospitable has been central to Jewish practice. It is said that the first Jew, Abraham's, lonely path through life was mitigated by his ability to draw people in and share his values and ideals by offering hospitality. Early Christians used the same tactic and even today many important religious events include breaking bread together. Abraham is held up as a paragon of faith so his hospitality toward the stranger is instructive. Though the Torah does not suggest that the stranger's good news was dependent on the hospitality offered by Abraham, the detail in which it is described shows that the Torah's redactors saw Abraham's hospitality as important.



Jewish liturgy includes many references to Abraham's open tent. The image signifies the importance of hospitality. It is not the modest temporary dwelling that Abraham and Sarah occupied that is remembered. It is the fact that it was open. Hospitality, sharing what we have and doing so with enthusiasm, is important enough that you will find reference to it in nearly every religious service. Jews are expected to follow Abraham and Sarah's example by inviting the stranger to the Passover Seder as well. In Judaism the two sacred places are the synagogue and the home. Hence, inviting someone into your home and sharing a meal is inviting a person into a sacred space and hospitality becomes part of what it means to maintain the Jewishness of that household. It is a way of living out the commandments that Jews must abide as part of the covenant. Being hospitable also means opening one's home and sharing food regardless of another's wealth or stature. Abraham and Sarah's experience illustrates why we offer hospitality without conditions or expectations. And we must surmise that if the redactors of the text cared enough to leave the elaborate detail with which this story is described, it must be because it contains something instructive.

The text also describes the meal offered to these strangers as lavish. Hospitality must include food and conversation because the cultural context into which these teachings were born saw gathering around a lavish meal as a deeply important and value laden custom. In Greco-Roman times sharing a lavish meal and discussing ideas was seen as the pinnacle of freedom. Passover hearkens back to that aspect of Greco-Roman culture as do the meals around which early Christians would discuss the life and teachings of Jesus. These very specific rituals have their roots in the hospitality demonstrated by the Biblical forerunners of the faith.

Breaking bread with others became the vehicle for conveying ideas and for Abraham a way of spreading the message of his faith. Hence, Jewish commentators praise Abraham for his unbridled show of hospitality as it was a practice that allowed him to spread his message of monotheism.

Jewish tradition surmises that part of becoming a distinguishable group means believing in specific shared ideas and one crucial ideal was the belief in treating others with as much dignity and respect as possible. That framework underlies Abraham's hospitality. Unlike the idolatry of the culture into which he was born, Abraham's faith was focused on the way human beings treat each other not on the intricacies of worshipping non human idols. His hospitality, therefore, is the outgrowth of what was then a very revolutionary view on faith and humanity. He saw his actions towards others as the demonstration of his devotion to One God and this is why his hospitality toward strangers is remembered and honored still.



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Hospitality in Christian Tradition

Rev. Christina S. Hale

Welcome and love are at the core of how Christians are called to be in the world. We have countless teachings in our Holy Bible in both the Old Testament and New Testament that directs us to love and welcome.

From our Old Testament: "the Lord your God is the God of all gods and Lord of all lords, the great, mighty, and awesome God who doesn't play favorites and doesn't take bribes. He enacts justice for orphans and widows, and he loves immigrants, giving them food and clothing. That means you must also love immigrants because you were immigrants in Egypt. (Deuteronomy 10:17-19)." God doesn't play favorites. God has shown us mercy and provision and expects us to take after his example to care for the least, the lost and the lonely.

From our New Testament: "Keep loving each other like family. Don't neglect to open up your homes to guests, because by doing this some have been hosts to angels without knowing it. Remember prisoners as if you were in prison with them, and people who are mistreated as if you were in their place. (Hebrews 13:1-3)." We love those in the family and those who are guests because God loved us first.

From the example of Jesus Christ on the night he was betrayed and handed over to death, he washed the disciples' feet and then said: "I give you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, so you also must love each other. This is how everyone will know that you are my disciples, when you love each other. (John 13:34-35)." We are to be known by living the same as Jesus first lived.

Unfortunately Christians have not always been known by these teachings. History is full of times when Christians were vicious. They attacked and put to death even fellow Christians. More horrific acts have been done in the name of the faith than I have room to chronicle in this article. At times it feels it is easier to document the times that Christians have failed to live up to these teachings. These doctrines are at the heart of who we are called to be and yet we are not perfect in living them. It is hard to overcome our fear in reaching out to those who are different, those who are immigrants, and those who are not us. And yet, we know that when we reach out in love to those we perceive as different, more often than not we find points of connection that bind us together as fellow travelers on the road.



Recently, I was asked to sit on a panel of interfaith leaders to discuss the role of women in the life of their faith tradition. One thing that immediately stood out was how much we had in common. I believe this is true on more than one matter. I challenge my church members to reach out in love each and every week. At this time in our world we need more love, more welcome, more genuine compassion to all we meet regardless of our faith or ideology. We need our hearts broken open for the God of Abraham to transform the world. It is my deepest hope that Christians and Muslims may join hands to show the world the power of living faith together.

The Rev. Christina S. Hale, MDiv. ThM. serves as Associate Pastor of Mission Bend United Methodist Church in Houston, TX

“The Guest is God” -- Hindu Traditions of Hospitality

Dr. Muhammad Zafar Iqbal

Hospitality is a virtue acclaimed by every culture since the written history of mankind. Every faith tradition is proud of its unique values about hospitality. Hindu religion lays great stress on the reverence to service of the guest.

‘Atithi Devo Bhava’ meaning ‘visitor is the God.’ is a Sanskrit verse, taken from an ancient Hindu scripture, which became part of the code of conduct for Hindu society. Lavina Melvani, in her article, Hindu Hospitality in the October-December 2003 web edition of the quarterly magazine Hinduism Today writes, “Be one to whom the

and joyfully led him to his throne. He personally washed Sudama's feet and fed him with his own hands. Sudama had brought a humble gift, a handful of parched rice tied in the corner of his shawl and was too ashamed to give it to Lord Krishna in front of all the fine courtiers, but Lord Krishna opened it with delight and ate the grains with pleasure and appreciation. To him, the true value of this meager gift lay in the affection with which it had been offered.” (1)

‘visitor is the God.’
atithi deva bhava

a Sanskrit verse, taken from an ancient Hindu scripture,

mother is a God. Be one to whom the father is a God. Be one to whom the teacher is a God. Be one to whom the guest is a God.” The Sanskrit word for guest is ‘Athithi’ meaning ‘without time,’ i.e., ‘one who has no fixed day for coming.’ It remains today the accepted custom of Hindus to visit friends, relatives and even strangers without notice. Hosting guests is one of the five central religious duties or ‘sacrifices’ of the Hindu household. The ancient Tamil scripture, Tirukural, says, “The whole purpose of earning wealth and maintaining a home is to provide hospitality to guests.” (1)

Hindu culture takes great pride and glory in being a good host and a good guest. There is a story about Lord Krishna which goes as follows: “When his boyhood friend, Sudama--hungry, impoverished and in rags--arrived at the palace, the guards refused to allow him in. But Lord Krishna, overjoyed to see his old friend, received him with open arms

Lavina Melvani, in another article, Hindu Hospitality: The Gods Amongst Us, states, “If Lord Krishna was the perfect host, then Sri Ram embodied the perfect guest. During his exile in the forest, he visited Subari, a lowly woman, who in her devotion and anxiety to give him only the very best, tasted each berry before she fed it to him. With grace Sri Ram accepted her offering, seeing the love with which it was given.” Such is the true nature of Hindu hospitality, in which both host and guest take care of the other’s feelings.

At the very heart of Hinduism is the belief that the Almighty permeates everything. When Baby Krishna, accused by Mother Yasodha of stealing butter, was asked to open his mouth, she was amazed to see the entire universe, galaxies and stars all within him. Indeed, the Hindu belief in the presence of the Paramatma in every living thing transforms each one of us into God.” (2)

Lavina Melvani writes, "The ancient Hindu texts say the guest has to be shown honor by the host's going out to meet him, offering him water to wash his feet, by giving him a seat, lighting a lamp before him, providing food and lodging and accompanying him some distance when he departs. Thousands of years have passed, but this code of etiquette remains little changed from the ancient scriptures." (1)

Lavina Melvani writes, "The ancient Hindu texts say the guest has to be shown honor by the host's going out to meet him, offering him water to wash his feet, by giving him a seat, lighting a lamp before him, providing food and lodging and accompanying him some distance when he departs. Thousands of years have passed, but this code of etiquette remains little changed from the ancient scriptures." (1)

In the Manu Dharma Shastras, for example, the host is directed thus: "All the food shall be very hot, and the guests shall eat in silence. Having addressed them with the question: 'Have you dined well?' let him give them water to sip, and bid farewell to them with the words: 'Now rest.'" K.T. Achaya in *Indian Food: A Historical Companion* points out that guests had an honored rank in Vedic society and, after being ceremoniously received, were offered the ambrosial beverage, madhuparka, consisting of ghee, curd, milk, honey and sugar.

The visit of a holy person is given extra special attention, and for good reason. Vriddha Harita Dharma Shashtra says that if an ascetic stay as a guest in a householder's home for a single night, the latter's accumulated sins are destroyed, and when such an ascetic takes food at a man's house, it is Vishnu himself who is fed." (1)

Mitesh Patel from Kathiawad region of Gujarat gives the example of his uncle who left the ancestral village thirty years ago to settle in the city of Rajkot. Three decades later, if

anyone from the village comes for a medical checkup to the big hospital in the city, his uncle makes sure healthy, home-made meals go out to the patient every single day. (1)

There is a code of conduct both for the guest and the host narrated as follows. A guest may be anyone from a close relative to a total stranger, and rules naturally vary accordingly. What is summarized here is for a visitor somewhere between the two extremes.

Arrival: It is traditional that a guest need not inform a host of his impending arrival. However, in today's busy world, more and more often guests do give advance notice. The host may insist that no advance notice is necessary, and close friends or relatives may even take advance notice as an affront, a disturbing sign that all may not be well with the relationship.

Duration: It is very impolite of the host to ask how long the guest is staying. But, as a guest, you should convey this information in a casual manner. In a gesture of hospitality, the host will naturally retort that you should really stay much longer.

Gifts: Gifts are always given to hosts when staying overnight in a home. The value of the gift varies greatly, of course, depending on the guest's circumstances and resources. It is proper to give a separate gift for the wife and the husband. The wife receives the nicest item. Small items should also be given for the children. In Sri Lanka, giving goes the other way as well. It is common for the host to give a gift to the guest, especially those poorer.

Helping: In a home without servants, considerate guests can help with housework and chores, as well as care for their quarters, even if the host insists it is not necessary. You can also help with cooking, as well as invite your hosts out for a meal.

Graciousness: It is an insult to refuse any offered drink or food. Blend into the family's rhythms. Be a genuine friend, taking real interest in the family's life and treating the children lovingly, as you would your own. Conversely, one should not meddle in family affairs, nor later make unflattering observations to others about one's hosts.

Thanks: After returning home, remember to send a warm and sincere thank-you letter, hand-written, mentioning some specific detail of your visit that you most appreciated.

Hosting is more an attitude than a set of practices. The perfect host is truly open to guests and honestly delighted



with their presence. That said, here are some specifics to keep your hosting up to par.

Welcome: Greet the guest with namaskara, invite him cheerfully into the house. Make him sit comfortably. Speak pleasantly to him, inquiring about his welfare.

Refreshments: Always offer the guest something to eat and drink. Usually tea or juice is served, along with snacks. At least a glass of water is offered (with a smile and apology).

Hosting: Guests who are members of the extended family will just fit in to the family routine. When a bit more formality is called for, the father, if present, will speak with the guest. If not present, the mother and a son will fulfill this role, and if no son is present, the mother may act as hostess, but only with the accompaniment of someone close to the family. The children may go off to play among themselves, stay with the adults or come and go.

Wife Home Alone: If the lady of the house is home alone and a male visitor comes to see her husband, it is not proper for her to invite him in, or for him to expect to enter. Rather, he will leave a message and depart.

Punctuality: Eastern life is generally more relaxed than in the West. A good guideline is do not be surprised or offended if your guest arrives late or early. But be punctual in your own engagements, as this is appreciated.

Duration of Stay: It is quite impolite to ask a guest how long he intends to stay, but it is good protocol for guests to make their plans and itinerary known from the outset.

Goodbyes: Always see your guest to his transport, and wave and watch until they are out of sight. (1)



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Hospitality as an Industry and its Ups and Downs

Mobashir Ahmed

Hospitality within the Service Sector is facing curious times---geopolitically and from a competitive standpoint. The race to quickly grow a brand based on glitzy amenities and spanking new designs seem to be the new formula in the current hospitality environment. This is not a great recipe for providing superlative service.

Today the success of a business is measured in financial terms. Although viable customer satisfaction, loyalty and quality service are keys to any organization's success, they are seldom expressed in financial terms. This in turn creates a disconnect with investment decisions. Clearly hospitality and service sentiments are diminishing in today's business environment. Personal touch needs to remain upfront in an age where apps and self-check-in have begun to usurp more traditional customer care. Loss of customer satisfaction begs for more attention by top managers, better and lasting service training and leadership's personal engagement with their customers. While this situation obviously is dire, major hospitality companies have started investing heavily in new technology platforms, buying concepts to enhance their growth and revenue-generating opportunities, and at the same time cutting off financial pipeline in the area of customer satisfaction and related services.

How has good service degenerated in the industry? Just look at the United Airlines for its inhuman treatment of its passenger. We experience continuously indifferent behavior of TSA personnel at the airports. When we call any business, credit card companies, or government agencies, you'll notice that human beings are being eliminated in favor of automation and your patience and frustration levels are being tested irrefutably.

Cardinal reasons for diminishing service levels in hospitality industry can be attributed to industry's



leadership who displays hubris, self-aggrandizement and overall disconnect with its customers and employees. In my many years of hospitality work I have found that dissatisfaction amongst customers and employees has a significant and measurable impact on financial outcomes for the organizations. For businesses it has a direct impact on growth and places revenue and profits at risk. For public sector organizations, poor service can significantly increase costs and sometimes lead to other negative social and community outcomes.

There are five key economic truths that quantify financial return on customer service:

1. As satisfaction levels drop, loyalty drops faster
2. Problems drive customers away
3. Many more customers experience problems than we think
4. Unhappy customers spread the word!
5. Effective customer service and response pays

All is not lost by any means. Just a few weeks ago, I found myself staying at the brand spanking new Virgin Hotel. As I stepped into my room I found a simple telephone on the asymmetrical end table. The phone had only one button, aside from the dial pad. A

central button marked by a large, red print exclaiming “YES” Press this button and you’ll find a Virgin employee on the other end ready to assist you with your issue, no matter what it is.’ This should be self-evident, right? Yet, well-meaning employees can still find a dozen ways to say no to their customers, which makes it incredibly important to set, and as often as necessary re-set, the cultural default to yes.

It is 7 a.m. local time in Istanbul, and at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel the troops are smiling and dressed to serve. But before they face a single guest, they make time for their 10 minute “lineup” meeting, a chance to align themselves for the task at hand by discussing one of their 16 central service principles, the core standards of the organization’s customer service culture. Every single day, 365 days a year, three times a day the lineup occurs in rotation. These are companies which have begun to cut through the rhetoric of “Customer Satisfaction” by summarizing the “bottom line” impact of poor service to help quantify the financial

risks of inaction and justify the imperative for improving customer service.

Here is the thing. In today’s world the challenge of providing great service is not in nuts and bolts, skills-and-details-related updates. The challenge is that even if hoteliers start off strong with a great orientation, the daily grind will ensure that functional issues ultimately end up overwhelming the service delivery. Daily lineup approach is a chance to keep employees focused on the overriding purpose.

We live in a service economy. With the exception of a few organizations the hospitality industry which prides itself on delivering high-quality service, has not developed an honest customer-oriented culture. Service industry desperately needs a redefinition of elevated personal services to humanize the impersonal aspects to exude the most superlative hospitality impressions.



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East and West: How They Differ in Hospitality

Khalida Jamilah

Introduction

"There are no strangers, just friends we haven't met yet."⁽¹⁾ This is an old saying from the Southern part of the United States which reflects the value of hospitality. According to the dictionary, hospitality means the friendly and generous reception and entertainment of guests, visitors, or strangers. This article presents different hospitality customs from selected countries that represent the Eastern and the Western hemisphere.

Hospitality in the United States

In the United States, punctuality is one of the most highly valued traits. To be late for an engagement or an invitation is insulting to the person who is kept waiting. Americans usually entertain simply and informally. Hosts often will say, "Make yourself at home," to a guest. This is considered to be a positive statement. To be treated like a member of the host's family is a gesture of respect. Alcoholic drinks are sometimes offered before and during the meal. Guests who are unable to consume alcoholic beverages for religious, medical, or personal reasons may request non-alcoholic drinks.

In addition, like other Western women, American women converse with other men, even if their husbands are not present. Hosts usually invite guests into the dining room after a brief period of socializing in the living room. Dinner is generally served between the hours of 6:30 and 8:00 PM and is considered to be a family meal. The children of a family, as well as the husband and wife, will probably share the meal with guests. Dinner may be served "family-style." Dishes of food are passed from person to person for each to take a portion on their own plates. Guests who are unfamiliar with foods presented often take a small amount of each food passed to them, taking more as desired when the dishes are offered again. Dinner may be served "buffet-style." In this case, food is placed on a side table for guests to serve themselves before proceeding into the dining room or living room to eat the meal. Guests who finish their first serving and wish to take a second serving simply return to the buffet table to "help themselves". Dinner may be served in two, three or four courses: Soup, salad, or fruit may be offered as a first course. "Seconds" (a second helping of food) might be offered only once to a guest.

In many American homes, the host refrains from offering the food more than a second time for fear offending the guest by his persistence. International visitors who are accustomed to refusing the second helping a number of times should realize that the offer may be extended only once. After receiving dinner hospitality, guests often present a gift to the hostess. This is considered a nice gesture, but not a necessary one. A written "thank-you" note or a telephone call to the hostess delivered or given within one week after the engagement is the most common and often most welcomed expression of appreciation.⁽²⁾

Hospitality in Germany

Arrive on time as punctuality indicates proper planning. Never arrive early. Never arrive more than 15 minutes later than invited without telephoning to explain why you have been detained. Do a short phone call or send a thank you note the following day to thank your host for her/his hospitality. Switch mobile phone off or put it on silent. Remain standing until invited to sit down. You may be shown to a particular seat.

Germans do not generally serve other people. Plates of food are passed around the table and each person takes what and how much he wants. The host will, however, often ask his guests if they would like more to drink. Do not expect Germans to ask you if there is anything you do not eat. Germans are direct communicators, they will expect someone to speak up if she/he wants something, disagree about or don't like something. Irritation and inconvenience will rather result if you remain silent and "spring" the problem on the host only when the dishes are being served. If you do not want any more food or drink, say so politely. Germans will not ask again, as they expect you to express your personal wishes. They will also not take it as impolite or an insult if you say "no".⁽³⁾

Hospitality in Russia

People invite friends to their places all the time. Friends can just pop in without invitation and that is considered normal. People really enjoy home visits. On regular days that is usually an informal gathering, around a kitchen table. On a big holiday – people gather around a big table in a living room.

For Russians, hospitality equals good food and plenty of it. Foreigners are a special guest, friends make a lot of effort to make sure they enjoy the evening. To be a good guest Russians hosts expect the guest to eat plenty of food. Nothing can make Russians more upset than a guest, who does not have a good appetite.

Russians often think that the guest does not like their food if they do not eat. At the same time that does not mean that guests have to finish everything on their plate. Russians will not be offended by that. Guests will be invited for a dinner. Breakfast or lunch meetings at people's homes are not typical. It will be a seated dinner with "zakuski" or appetizers, which are enough to satisfy hunger, but there might be a soup and there certainly will be a main course and tea and cakes in the end of the evening. Russians do not wear street shoes at home. Although hosts may be shy to ask the foreigner to take the shoes off, it is a custom of which guests should be aware. Be ready to talk and listen a lot. Russians love telling stories. Also, be ready to engage in a deep conversation. Russians love to talk about serious matters at the dinner table. They enjoy hearing everyone's opinion on politics, economy, science and other subjects. And they care about what others say. (4)

Hospitality in Japan

To be invited to someone's house is considered a great honor in Japan. Bring a small present or "omiyage". It does not have to be too fancy, chocolates or any typical souvenir from your country would go well as a gift. There is no tradition in Japan to open gifts right away, so if the hosts make a present to you as a responsive gesture of courtesy do not unwrap it immediately because they would consider this as excessive curiosity. Guests are expected to arrive on time. Do not enter the house with shoes on. This is one of the few rules for which Japanese



will not make an exception just because one is a foreigner. Slippers are usually provided in the entrance hall. Emptying dishes to the last grain of rice is considered good manners. Japanese culture is very quiet and peaceful, and they do not mind short periods of silence in the middle of the conversation. Do not be surprised if this happens during your visit. Hospitality is based on the old saying from the tea ceremony, *ichigo ichie*: "treasure every encounter with another person, because it may never happen again." (5)

Hospitality in Indonesia

Along with unity and conformity to society's rules, honor and respect for the individual is the basis of Indonesian culture. Indonesians value loyalty to family and friends above all else. Indonesia as a whole is viewed by its people as an extended family with the president, schoolmasters and leaders of business enterprises referred to as "fathers" by the public. Social events generally start late. Indonesians usually arrive thirty minutes after the stated time. Any business discussions at social events should be initiated by Indonesians. A fork and spoon are used for dining. The fork is held in the left hand and the spoon in the right. Use the fork to push food onto the spoon. Most Indonesians are Muslim and consume no liquor or pork.



Indonesians are known for their hospitality. Do not reject their hospitality, as it will be viewed as a personal rejection. Never refuse food or drink, but never finish either completely. Compliments about the food are appreciated. It is a special honor to be invited to an Indonesian's home. The host is always the last to sit and eat. Men are generally served first. Wait to be invited to eat or drink. The guest of honor or senior person begins the meal; this is a distinct honor. If you are asked to begin the meal, you should refuse twice and then begin. Fingers are still used for eating in some places. Both hands are kept above the table while eating. If possible, reciprocate with a dinner before leaving the country. A lavish dinner may be criticized; be generous and hospitable, but don't overdo it. (6)



Hospitality in Iran

A guest in Iran is like a cherished precious jewel. People will likely put themselves out for you by sharing what they don't have enough of and spending on what they cannot afford – and that's Iranian social etiquette in its purest form. Iranians take their dinner very seriously and have many customs to go along with it. They take pride in their food and usually prepare much more than necessary to help demonstrate their wealth. If you are an important guest, you are most likely to be situated at the head of the table and served first when the food comes out. When eating, to show respect, make sure to finish the food. It is considered very rude to leave food on your plate in an Iranian's home. Another way to avoid being perceived as rude is to make sure to try a little from all the dishes served, and try not to look at someone else's meal. A usual invitation for a cup of tea can be extended to stay the night.

Conclusion

In the West, hospitality is more informal where everyone is treated equally regardless his or her age. In the East, people tend to honor the most senior guest because elders are seen to be more wise than the younger generations. Dress code is another main difference between the two hemispheres. The West is more relaxed in their attire so guests can dress informal. The Eastern culture place great importance in physical appearance so guests are expected to dress elegantly. Another main difference between the East and the West is communication. The Western people are more expressive while the Eastern people are inexpressive so guests are expected to wait for the host to offer them any food items at the table. Despite differences in hospitality tradition between the East and the West, similarities between the two are sharing kindness and respect for each other.

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Hospitality in Different Cultures

Seher Bhatti



Hospitality goes back a long way into the ages, why, in ancient cultures hospitality involved welcoming a stranger and offering them food, shelter, and safety. Today, centuries later it has evolved into an industry of flourishing businesses all over the world. It's interesting to note how hospitality is observed through various cultures, particularly when comparing the eastern to the western cultures. (1)

Beginning with the east, in ancient Greece, the host is presumed to ensure the needs of their guests are met. Greek society would put you in high social standing if you followed the requirements of hospitality, it would associate you with nobility. Some ancient Greeks believed that Zeus



Hand painted icons of the Saints ::
Hospitality of Abraham

himself had inspired the duty of hospitality. The Greeks weren't the only people that related such customs to their god, in India, they relate hospitality to an old saying: "the guest is God." The Meccans too loved their idol gods, but that doesn't mean they were any less in being hospitable. For all their bad habits, they very much appreciated a traveler's company and would not only welcome them but have them under their protection, provide shelter for them. An example from Prophet Muhammad's (sa) life was when he and Hazrat Abu Bakr were escaping from Mecca to Medina. Being it a long journey they had to stop for shelter. It was not uncommon in Arab culture to provide food and shelter for a traveler. Opportunity struck for a poor old woman, in spite of her living conditions she offered the travelers whatever she had and allowed them to rest. The east was generally good about treating guests. This attitude still exists today, as TV personality Anthony Bourdain had seen on his travels to the Middle East. He would visit different countries and ethnic groups in order to learn more about them, particularly when it came to food. Being a chef he was fascinated with the different foods around the world. In one village, he visited in the Middle East, they did not care for his views and thoughts, but when it was time to eat, they welcomed him and anyone else with open arms and accepted him like he was an old friend.



Taking a look at the West, hospitality is not seen as a means of protection and survival, except in rare cases. In fact, it is more associated with etiquette and entertainment, although providing for one's guest and showing respect is included in this. However, in the West hospitality has lost the true meaning of serving others rather it is looked at as in exchange for the hospitality "what's in it for me?" A common phrase used in the western culture. In the Western culture and now perhaps in some parts of Eastern culture people tend to isolate themselves from each other and only interact with a matter of business or need. In fact, more emphasis is placed on contributing to hospitality as an industry. There is now education that is primarily for this purpose, to supply the entertainment needs of travelers, whether it's staff members for hotels, crew for cruise ships, flight crew for airplanes, and waiters for restaurants etc.

Ahmadi Muslims follow hospitality heavily after the examples and guidance provided by the Prophet of Islam, Muhammad (sa) and Messiah of the age, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (as) of Qadian. This concept of hospitality is especially displayed at the annual conventions of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community when this community accommodates hundreds and thousands of guests. In one of his Friday Sermons, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad (aba), Fifth Khalifa of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, said:

"The Holy Prophet of Islam (sa) did not merely honor his guests with good arrangements of food; rather, he took care of their small needs and at times served them personally. He counseled his followers to do the same and said, 'if you claim to love me then follow me'. The hospitality he enjoined was without the hope or wish for a return of favor, or praise and purely for the sake of obeying God's command. He advised to serve guests in an excellent manner for three days for this was the guests' due. He said if one believed in God and the Day of Judgement one should honor guests. The hospitality of the Holy Prophet of Islam (sa) was born out of fervor to serve but he also carried it out to exemplify the teachings of Islam to people of other faiths or of no faith. Thus, it is worth noting that his hospitality was not just for the apparent and physical well-being of his guests but also for their spiritual well-being. This is also the teaching he imparted to his followers." (2)

Thus, it is only with the guidance of God that members of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community are able to follow with the duty of hospitality in the sincerest way. May Allah enable us all to continue in the footsteps of our spiritual leaders, Amin.

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RELIGION & SCIENCE

'Love Hormone,' How it works in Hospitality?

Dr. Zia H. Shah

Hillel was a Jewish teacher of Jesus' time, when a potential convert approached him and asked to be taught the entire Torah while standing on one foot. Hillel summarized the incident as follows, "That which is hateful to you do not do to others. All the rest is commentary. Now go and learn." I would like to say the same thing about the holy Quran. I believe that the basic theme of every divinely revealed scripture is love and compassion and all scriptures reflect that. I have written an article about the message of compassion and service in the holy Quran, Two Hundred Verses about Compassionate Living in the Quran(1) and also about the Bible, A Message of Compassion and Love from the Holy Bible.(2)

The famous Persian poet Rumi is known to have said, "Love is the bridge between you and everything." (3) It is not only the key to our interaction with each other or our hospitality and morality, but, also our eventual relationship with the Divine or our spirituality.

The best and the least selfish love known to mankind is maternal love. Oxytocin, a hormone that has been dubbed as the "love hormone," is secreted in the highest concentrations from the maternal brain during pregnancy, delivery and lactation. There is a large body of research showing that it is one of the main causes of the strong maternal-child bond.

The same hormone is working for the maternal instinct in all the mammalian species, offering another of the thousands of proofs for Darwinian evolution. I believe that God brought His grand plan of millions of species of life, with humans at its apex, on our planet earth, through natural laws and mechanisms and insights in those details guide our lives in so many different ways.

Virtually all vertebrates have an oxytocin-like hormone that supports reproductive functions and a vasopressin-like hormone involved in water regulation. The two genes are usually located close to each other (less than 15,000 bases apart) on the same chromosome. The two genes are believed to result from a gene duplication event; the ancestral gene is estimated to be about 500 million years old.



Hillel the Elder teaching a man the meaning of the Torah. **Source: Wikipedia**

Today I want to review how the 'love hormone' not only governs the maternal instinct but many aspects of human love and compassion, which manifest in so many different ways, including hospitality for our relative and friend guests.

Pregnant women with higher levels of oxytocin during their first trimester bonded more strongly with their babies after they were born, according to a 2007 study in the journal Psychological Science. And compared with other women, women with higher levels throughout their pregnancy and in the first month after birth reported engaging in more behaviors such as singing,

feeding and bathing their infants in specific ways that promoted an exclusive relationship between the two, the study found.(4)

Comparing urine levels of oxytocin and a related hormone called vasopressin in biological and adoptive children who lived in Russian and Romanian orphanages, researchers found that oxytocin rose in biological children after having contact with their mothers. The study, published in 2005 in the journal *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, showed that oxytocin levels remained static in the adoptive children in the same situation, suggesting a physiological basis for why some adoptive children have difficulty forming secure relationships.(5)

Oxytocin has been implicated not only in maternal child bonding and romantic relationships but all sorts of human and even human-animal interaction.

In one study, reported in the June 2, 2005, issue of *Nature* (Vol. 435, No. 7042, pages 673-676), behavioral economist Michael Kosfeld, PhD, of the University of Zurich, Zak and colleagues had 29 pairs of male college students play an investment game with tokens in which one member of the team acted as an investor and the other as a trustee. Half of the participants inhaled an oxytocin spray and the other half a placebo.

Of the investors who whiffed oxytocin, about half gave all of their tokens to the trustees, and most of the rest handed over the majority of their tokens. By contrast, only a fifth of investors on placebo parted with their tokens, while another third offered most of theirs.(6)

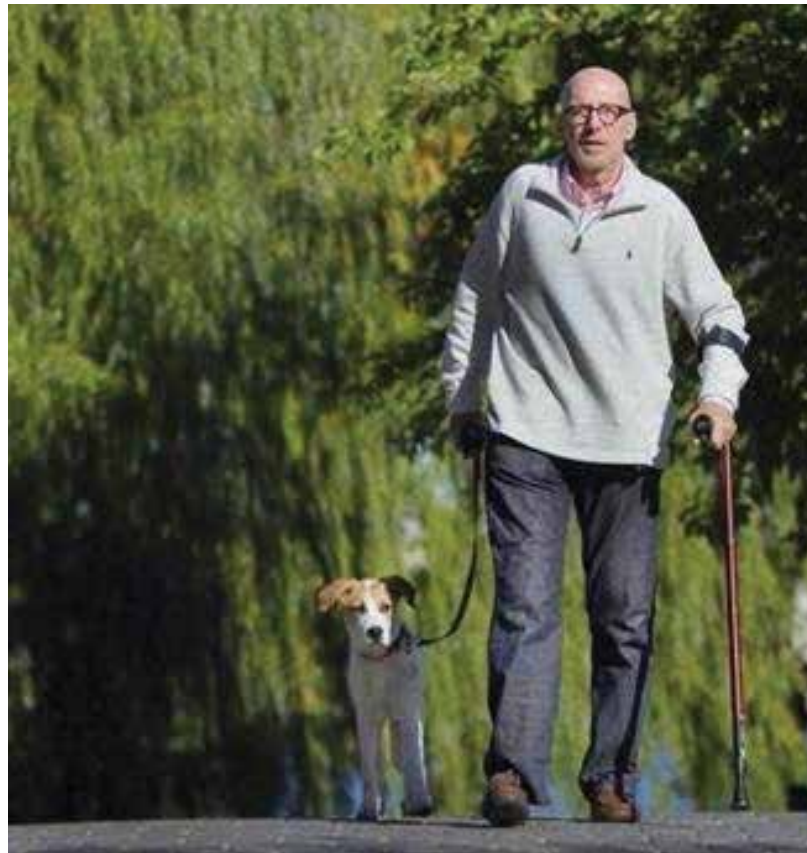
In another study, published in the Nov. 7, 2007, issue of the online Public Library of Science journal *PLoS ONE* (Vol. 2, No. 11), Zak and colleagues found an even stronger relationship between oxytocin and generosity than the team had found earlier with trust. Here, participants who inhaled either oxytocin or a placebo were asked to decide how to split a sum of money with a stranger. Those who received the hormone offered the stranger 80 percent more money than those receiving the placebo, the team found.(7)

Oxytocin has been shown to help people with autism improve their ability to recognize emotion, and Wallum found that the same receptor variant that increases risk for marital crisis in women is linked to social problems in girls. These include trouble getting along with others and a preference for being alone.(8)

Adam Guastella, a clinical psychologist at University of

Sydney's Brain and Mind Research Institute, and a pioneer in studies of how oxytocin can help people with autism, thinks the hormone can also help people in couple therapy by facilitating empathic communication. His research has shown that people who get oxytocin are more focused on positive emotion: they remember happy faces better than angry and neutral ones. Research by others has shown that oxytocin increases trust, generosity and our ability to identify emotion in facial expressions. It is perhaps by these mechanisms that the hormone improves communication. (9)

In a 2003 study, both humans and dog oxytocin levels in the blood rose after five to 24 minutes of a petting session. This possibly plays a role in the emotional bonding between humans and dogs.(10)



Oxytocin may have a sinister side to it as well. It may be the basis of some of our prejudices. For example, oxytocin can increase positive attitudes, such as bonding, toward individuals with similar characteristics, who then become classified as "in-group" members, whereas individuals who are dissimilar become classified as "out-group" members. Race can be used as an example of in-group and out-group tendencies because society often categorizes individuals into groups based on race (Caucasian, African American, Latino, etc.). One study that examined race and empathy found that participants receiving nasally administered oxytocin had stronger reactions to pictures of in-group members making

pained faces than to pictures of out-group members with the same expression.(11) This shows that individuals of one race may be more inclined to help individuals of the same race than individuals of another race when they are experiencing pain.

Oxytocin has also been implicated in lying when lying would prove beneficial to other in-group members. In a study where such a relationship was examined, it was found that when individuals were administered oxytocin, rates of dishonesty in the participants' responses increased for their in-group members when a beneficial outcome for their group was expected.(12)

Both of these examples show the tendency to act in ways that benefit people with which one feels is part of their social group, or in-group. During conflict, individuals receiving nasally administered oxytocin demonstrate more frequent defense-motivated responses towards in-group members than out-group members. Further, oxytocin was correlated with participant desire to protect vulnerable in-group members, despite that individual's attachment to the conflict.(13)

Similarly, it has been demonstrated that when oxytocin is administered, individuals alter their subjective preferences in order to align with in-group ideals over out-group ideals. (14)

The in-group bias is evident in smaller groups; however, it can also be extended to groups as large as one's entire country leading toward a tendency of strong national zeal. A study done in the Netherlands showed that oxytocin increased the in-group favoritism of their nation while decreasing acceptance of members of other ethnicities and foreigners.(15)

People also show more affection for their country's flag while remaining indifferent to other cultural objects when exposed to oxytocin.(16) It has thus been hypothesized that this hormone may be a factor in xenophobic tendencies secondary to this effect. Therefore, oxytocin appears to affect individuals at an international level where the in-group becomes a specific "home" country and the out-group grows to include all other countries.

In conclusion, maternal love, romantic love, hospitality, love for one's race and patriotism, all seem to share a common thread, a common mechanism, the 'love hormone.' Greater understanding of the biological mechanisms may give us newer insights to embellish our love and hospitality. It may also offer possible cures for racism, xenophobia and exclusion politics of the extremist politicians.

Dr. Zia H. Shah is the Chief Editor of the Muslim Times with 41,000 followers in Twitter; has authored 400 articles on Religion, Secularism and Religion and Science.

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Women's Space

A Muslim Woman's Responsibility for the Care of Parents and Parents-in-law

Shahina Bashir

"Thy Lord has commanded, 'Worship none but Him, and show kindness to parents. If one of them or both of them attain old age with thee, never say unto them any word expressive of disgust nor reproach them, but address them with excellent speech, and lower to them the wing of humility out of tenderness. And say, 'My Lord have mercy on them even as they nourished me in my childhood.'" (1)

The central doctrine of Islam is the belief in One God and to worship no other deity or objects. In the verse quoted above it is interesting to note that immediately after the commandment to worship God, He has commanded us to be kind to our parents. This kindness is owed to them because the children learn about God from none other than the parents. After all, a child can see the attributes of Mercy, Compassion, Love, and Providence in the actions displayed by his parents.

At another place the Qur'an states, "And We have enjoined on man concerning his parents — his mother bears him in weakness upon weakness, and his weaning takes two years — 'Give thanks to Me and to thy parents. Unto Me is the final return.'" (2) A human child is more helpless than offsprings of other mammals. It is this dependency which creates a long-lasting bond between the parents and children. From the moment a child is conceived it is immediately dependent on the mother for all nourishment. Even after birth she is under her mother's care. In the cycle of life, as the mother ages then she

becomes like a child and is in need of attention and care. Now it is the daughter's turn to look after her aged mother.

In the United States and other western countries, the care of the aged may be under the auspices of the state. According to a report published by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), in 2014 there were 15,600 nursing homes in America with 1.4 million residents at these homes.(3) More than half of them were over 85 years of age and most of them were women (72%) who don't have spouses. They either don't have a reasonable support system or come from small families.(4) From the data it is apparent that those who do get admitted in nursing homes are there mostly because of their inability to perform daily living functions due to chronic illness. Such patients are in need of assistance with activities like bathing, walking, or eating. Many might even be bed-ridden and have none or limited mobility. Although many residents only stay for a short time a greater percentage actually remain there till end of life.

Muslims rarely send the aged to the nursing homes simply because of the Islamic teachings based on the Holy Qur'an and the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad (sa) which direct the adult children to take care of the aging parents when they can no longer live independently. When the parents become old and infirm they move in with their children. In most cases if there is a son, then the elderly parents stay with him and his family. Although the verses quoted earlier do not make any distinction between male or female children, the task of care-giving generally becomes the responsibility of the women. The men who are the heads of the households are financially responsible and since they are the primary breadwinners which require them to

be out of the house, it is the woman (wife) who stays at home to care for not only her children but also the parents-in-law.

Regarding the role of Muslim women in matters of caring for the elderly, the fourth Caliph of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, Hazrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad (rh) said, "As such, the role of a Muslim woman amidst her home and family is far from over with the coming of age of the children. She remains deeply bonded to the past as well as to the future. It is her kind and humane concern, and her innate ability to look after those who stand in need of care, which comes to the rescue of the older members of society. They remain as precious and respected as before and continue to be integral members of the family. The mother plays a major part in looking after them and providing them with her company, not as drudgery and tedium, but as live natural expression of human kinship. Thus, when she grows older she can rest assured that such a society will not eject her nor leave her abandoned as a relic of the past (5)."

In the Qur'an, God has given specific instructions regarding the manner of speech when addressing the elderly parents. We are told to exercise patience and not show any disgust or reproach if due to the old age, the parents become irritable or short-tempered. Even if they use harsh words there should not be any retaliation or argument. As human beings it is not an easy feat to stay calm and poised when it might seem easier to talk back or argue. However, it is of utmost importance to be patient and tolerant. It should be a constant reminder that being obedient, kind, and gentle to the elderly is in fact pleasing to God and He in turn rewards those who exhibit these traits.

For a Muslim woman her task of care-giving does not end with her husband's parents but she has responsibilities towards her own parents as well. Even after she is married and moves to a separate house, her love and ties with her own parents are not severed. She has to show the same level of kindness and caring towards them as she did before she was married. Sometimes the situation may arise that a house may be occupied with a woman's parents as well as her in-laws. This may not be a common scenario but with the families becoming smaller with fewer children, there are not many options for the sharing of the responsibilities of taking care of the parents. The task becomes even more daunting and it is indeed challenging for one person to be attentive to the needs of three or four elderly members of the house. Under such circumstances, it becomes incumbent upon the husband to come up with ways to alleviate the burden on the wife for whom it would be practically impossible to care for the adults, the children, and attend to

household matters.

The Holy Qur'an unequivocally calls the believers to be mindful of their parents and care for them in their old age just as the parents had looked after the children when they were helpless infants. Though one may think that there is no clear mention in the Qur'an regarding the responsibilities towards the parents' of spouses, it is understood that both husband and wife are to be kind and benevolent towards each other's parents and family members in general. By serving one's parents sincerely and with complete devotion, God will not only reward her, but out of His Mercy, will overlook her shortcomings. Thus, the Holy Prophet Muhammad (sa) had said, "Unfortunate is that person who got an opportunity to serve on of his parents and failed to earn God's forgiveness." (6)



Shahina Bashir has a Masters in Science in biology from Texas Woman's University. She is the chairperson of the Ahmadi Muslim Women Writers' Association.

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NEWS, VIEWS, & REVIEWS

Muslims care more about halal food than halal income, deputy minister says

BY ZURAIRI AR



malaymail
online

KUALA LUMPUR, April 19 — Datuk Dr Asyraf Wajdi Dusuki lamented today that Muslims here care more about the halal status of their food, compared to the status of their source of income.

The deputy minister in charge of Islamic affairs said the public perceives Islam as only related to worship, while the issue of halal and haram — what is permissible and forbidden in Islam — is seen as only related to consumption.

"The concern over halal food and halal labels is paramount. But the similar concerns may not be true when it comes to where the money comes from to buy that halal food," Asyraf said in his keynote address at a seminar on Islamic financial institutions and charity here.



The senator said when it comes to consuming meat, the public are very concerned about ensuring that the slaughter is Shariah compliant, but not as much as the money involved in the purchase.

"The money they received to buy that food, even if coming from usury, interest, corruption, they don't care.

"This is something very much the reality in our society today," said the deputy minister in the Prime Minister's Department.

On Monday, minister Datuk Seri Jamil Khir Baharom had said that the authorities will not issue halal certification for non-alcoholic "beer" or any product that uses "haram"-related names like ham or bacon.

According to state news agency Bernama, the minister in charge of Islamic affairs said the term "halal beer" went against the manual procedure for Malaysia's halal certification.

Under the Trade Descriptions (Certification and Marking of Halal) Order 2011, only the federal Islamic Development Department — better known by its Malay abbreviation, Jakim — and state Islamic departments and councils can issue halal certification.

The report also said that fast food chain A&W switched to calling its signature root beer drink, "RB", in 2013, in order to get the halal certification for all its outlets.

The issue of halal certification surfaced last October after an executive with US pretzel chain Auntie Anne's revealed that their application for halal certification had failed due to, among others, concerns over "pretzel dogs" on the menu.

Some fast food restaurants in Malaysia use non-pork alternatives for ham and bacon, such as turkey ham and beef bacon. There are also vegetarian versions of "bak kut teh", a pork ribs soup.

HUFFPOST

Christian Women On Twitter Unload About Misogyny In The Church

"Good luck ~nding a husband!"

A Twitter hashtag about Christian women has revealed some ugly truths about misogyny in the church.

Christian author Sarah Bessey started the thread Tuesday night with the tag #ThingsOnlyChristianWomenHear to highlight issues surrounding male privilege in many Christian communities.

"It was just a conversation I was wanting to have with my followers about something I care about, but it resonated more widely than I expected," Bessey told The Huffington Post on Thursday.

The conversation, which she said she initiated "on a whim," quickly amassed hundreds of tweets from women sharing some of the dehumanizing things they've heard from others in their Christian communities.

"This hashtag is pulling back the curtain on the everyday lived experiences of women within the Church," Bessey wrote in a Facebook post Wednesday morning.



As several of the users noted, misogyny is by no means a Christian problem nor a religious one, alone. And the thread didn't delve extensively into issues of race, class, sexual orientation or other important factors that create imbalances both within Christian communities and in society at large.

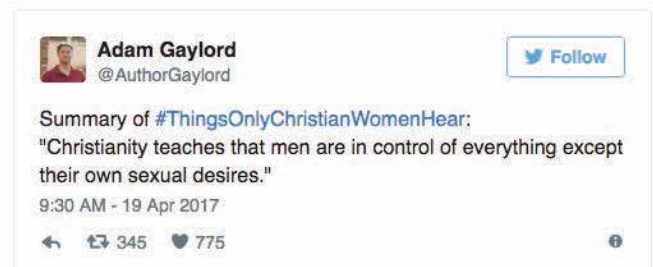
But the responses highlighted the high degree of white, male, and Christian privilege that exists in all areas of American society, and which also affect Christian women across the spectrum of backgrounds.

"I love the Church but I also know that we can't fix what we refuse to acknowledge," Bessey told HuffPost. I think hashtags like this are bringing light to some dark corners that we'd rather not see sometimes and I think there is an invitation from God in that - an invitation to open up the windows and bring this to the light."

Many of the tweets brought to light issues surrounding love, sex and marriage:



The no-eating-with-another-woman rule was made popular by evangelical pastor Billy Graham in 1948 and plays into the notion that men have uncontrollable sexual urges that women are ultimately responsible for.



Bessey said she hoped the thread would help other women know they aren't alone in their experiences. "Right away, through something that seems small like a hashtag conversation on Twitter, we all felt less alone, less isolated," she said. "There is something so healing about 'you, too? me, too!'"

Several tweets referred to "The Billy Graham Rule," which was recently in the news after a 2002 interview with Vice President Mike Pence resurfaced. Pence reportedly told The Hill that "he never eats alone with a woman other than his wife and that he won't attend events featuring alcohol without her by his side."

poetry CORNER

Mahmood's Aameen

By Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (as) of Qadian

The Promised Messiah and Mahdi (as)

Published on June 7, 1897

Once we beheld Your face our star is shining bright
All goals have been achieved the cup is overflowing
With your kindness, my Lord, my wish has been fulfilled
Bless this day O Glorious One Who watches over me
All my friends are here, You have made this happen
Your love, my Darling, invited these kind people
This blessed day is dawning with hopes realized
Bless this day O Glorious One Who watches over me
Loving guests have arrived, full of deep devotion
My heart is content and my soul is satisfied
But my heart grieves to think of the time of departure
Bless this day O Glorious One Who watches over me
This world too is an inn, anyone we meet will leave
Though one lives a hundred years will surely depart
There's no room for complaint, this house is transitory
Bless this day O Glorious One Who watches over me
O friends and dear ones don't forget the afterlife
Invest some in the journey, spend some in endeavor
This world is temporary keep away from its love
Bless this day O Glorious One Who watches over me
Don't let it captivate you, dislodge your heart from it
Reject its attachment, just move away from it
Its a serpent my friends, protect yourselves from it
Bless this day O Glorious One Who watches over me

Translated by Shazia Sohail



FROM THE ARCHIVE

Muslim Sunrise: January – June 1978 (Number 1—2) Volume XLV

One is the Human Spirit

By Justice Sir Muhammad Zafrulla Khan Former President, International Court of Justice

In the Islamic concept the unity of the human spirit derives from the unity of the Creator of the universe. The very first chapter of the Holy Quran, the scripture of Islam, opens with the declaration:

“The worthiness of the highest praise belongs to God alone Who has created the universe and sustains and nourishes it and leads it stage by stage towards perfection.” (1:2)

Jealousies and rivalries that divide the human spirit are generated by our setting up a multiplicity of gods, under varying denominations, race, color, blood, wealth, culture, standard of living etc. The unifying force must be our consciousness that every human being is a creature of the same God who created us and that his welfare is as dear to Him as our own. It is our relationship through Him that brings about unity and fosters a spirit of brotherhood. Everything else is divisive and unless it is controlled and regulated by that consciousness would lead to ruin.

We have been admonished: “O mankind, be mindful of your duty to your Lord, Who created you from a single soul and from it created its mate and from the two created and spread large number of men and women.” (4:2)

The diversity of our pursuits and interests should not impel us into situations of hostile and aggressive competition; we must regulate our relationship and seek adjustment and coordination through beneficent cooperation; as we have been directed:

“Assist one another in piety and rectitude and assist not one another in sin and transgression; and be mindful of your duty to God; surely God’s punishment is severe.” (5:3)

We have been warned against hostility and division and have been urged to unite on the basis of our common allegiance to our Maker:

“Take fast hold, all together, of the rope of God, and be not divided. Call to mind the favor of God which He bestowed upon you when you were at enmity with each other and He united your hearts in love so that by His grace you became as brethren. You were on the brink of a pit of fire and He rescued you from it. Thus God expound to you His commandments that you may be guided.” (3:104)

The message of Islam is universal; it is addressed to whole of mankind. It is not confined to any particular people, nor is any people excluded from it. The Quran affirms:

“Proclaim, O Prophet: O mankind, verily I am God’s Messenger to you all. To him belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth. There is no God but He. He bestows life and He causes death.” (7:159)

There is no room here for a god who bestows life, for another who maintains it and for a third who destroys it.

The beneficence of the Prophet of Islam was not

confined to a particular people. It was unequivocally announced: "We have sent thee as a mercy for the entire universe." (21:108)

On the occasion of the pilgrimage the Holy Prophet proclaimed: There is no superiority for an Arab over a non-Arab, nor for a non-Arab over an Arab; nor is a white one to be preferred over a colored one, nor a colored one over a white one. You are all equal as brothers.

This is why in Islam there has at no time been any distinction on the basis of race, color or blood. Islam is color blind.

There is no privilege in Islam. There is no church, no church hierarchy, no ordination, no priesthood. The whole emphasis is on righteousness. That is the sole badge of honor. The Holy Quran has announced:

"O mankind, we have created you from a male and female, and we have divided you into nations and tribes for greater facility of intercourse. Verily, the most honored among you in the sight of God is he who is the most righteous among you. Surely, God is all knowing and all aware." (49:14)

The Quran recognizes that God sent His revelation to every people and that every people has had its Prophet:

"Thou art but a warner; and every people has had its guide. (13:8) We have sent thee with enduring truth, as a bearer of glad tidings and as a Warner. There is no people to whom a Warner has not been sent." (35:25) It goes much further and requires belief in the truth of all Prophets and all revealed books. For instance: "Affirm: We believe in God and in that which has been sent down to us and that which was sent down to Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and his children and that which was given to Moses and Jesus, and that which was given to all other Prophets from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them and to Him we wholly submit ourselves." (2:137)

And again: The messenger has full faith in that which has been sent down to him from his Lord and so have

the believers: all of them believe in God, and in His angels and in His Books and in His Messengers, affirming: We make no distinction between any of His Messengers. (2:286)

This secures reverence for all Prophets and revealed books and promotes and fosters the unity of human spirit.

Despite the diversity of creeds and beliefs which divides mankind Islam seeks to promote understanding and accord on the basis of a mutually acceptable fundamental. The Holy Quran lays down the directive: "Say to the People of the Book: Let us agree upon one matter which is the same for you and for us, that we worship none but God, and that we associate no partners with Him, and that some of us take not others for Lords beside God. Then, if they turn away, say to them: Bear ye witness that we have submitted to God." (3:65)

It is the Unity of the Godhead alone that can safeguard the unity of the human spirit.

The children of Adam who started on the Unity of the Godhead soon began to fall away from it and proceeded to fashion various types of gods and even goddesses for themselves. A whole succession of Prophets and Divine Messengers were from time to time raised among them in every part of the earth to wean them away from the worship of false gods and to win them back to the worship of One true God.

The history of man presents a panorama of this struggle between the yearning of the human spirit to reach out to the Unity of the Creator and man's tendency to sink into the worship of false deities of every description. Every falling away was inspired by or imported in its wake the exploitation of man by his fellow men which imposed or involved a division or degradation of the human spirit.



Questions & Answers

What was the reason for the appearance of the Holy Prophet(sa) in Arabia?

That the last Divine guidance should shine forth from Arabia was determined by Divine wisdom. The Arabs are descended from Ismael (as) who was cut asunder from Israel and had, under Divine wisdom, been cast into the wilderness of Paran (Faean), which means two fugitives. The descendants of Ismael had been cut asunder from Bani Israel by Abraham himself and they had no part in the law of the Torah, as was written that they would not inherit from Isaac.

Thus they were abandoned by those to whom they belonged and had no relationship with anyone else. In all other countries there were some traces of worship and commandments which indicated that they had at one time received instruction from Prophets. Arabia alone was a country that was utterly unacquainted with such teachings and was the most backward of all. Its turn came last of all and it received the benefit of a universal prophethood, so that all countries might share again in the blessings of prophethood, and the errors that had become current in the meantime among them might be weeded out. The Holy Quran is the Perfect Book which undertook the entire project of human reform and is not addressed only to one people. It seeks the reform of all and has set forth all grades of human development. It teaches savages the manners and ways of humanity and therefore instructs them in high moral qualities. Thus there is no need of any other book besides the Holy Quran.

(The Philosophy of the Teachings of Islam: Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (as) of Qadian, The Promised Messiah and Mahdi)



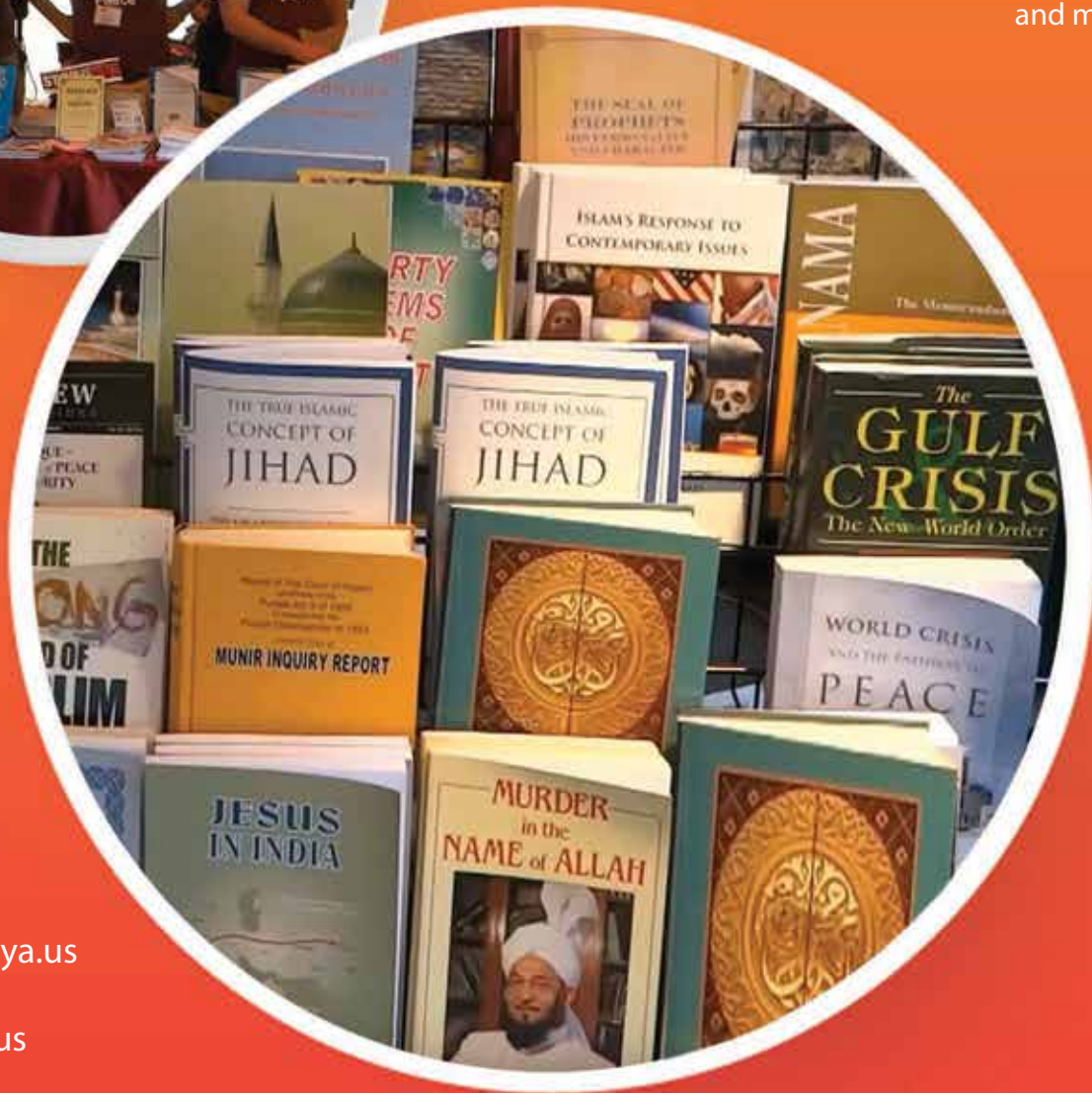
Sept. 7, 1954 file photo, Muslims visit the Kaaba, during a pilgrimage to Makkah

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